

TO THE READER.

K I N D L Y use this book very carefully. If the book is disfigured or marked or written on while in your possession the book will have to be replaced by a new copy or paid for. In case the book be a volume of set of which single volumes are not available the price of the whole set will be realized

C. L. 29.



Class No.....**F.823**.....

Book No.....**M.93**.....

Acc. No.....**9790**.....

Title

Author

Accession No.

Call No.

BORROWER'S
NO.

ISSUE
DATE

BORROWER'S
NO.

ISSUE
DATE

Title

Author

Accession No

Call No.

BORROWER'S
NO.

ISSUE
DATE

BORROWER'S
NO.

ISSUE
DATE

MY BEST ANIMAL STORY

SOME SIMILAR ANTHOLOGIES



MY BEST STORY—FIRST SERIES
MY BEST STORY—SECOND SERIES
MY BEST ADVENTURE STORY
MY BEST DETECTIVE STORY
MY NAUGHTIEST STORY
MY FUNNIEST STORY
MY BEST THRILLER
MY BEST PLAY



BEST MYSTERY STORIES
BEST DETECTIVE STORIES—FIRST SERIES
BEST DETECTIVE STORIES—SECOND SERIES
BEST CRIME STORIES
BEST MURDER STORIES
SCOTTISH SHORT STORIES
IRISH SHORT STORIES
THE GHOST BOOK

MY BEST ANIMAL STORY

AN ANTHOLOGY OF STORIES
CHOSEN BY
THEIR OWN AUTHORS



ERIC PETERSON COLLECTION
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

LONDON
FABER & FABER LIMITED
24 RUSSELL SQUARE

FIRST PUBLISHED IN JULY MCMXXXV
BY FABER AND FABER LIMITED
24 RUSSELL SQUARE LONDON W.C.1
PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
LATIMER TREND AND CO PLYMOUTH
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

3
acc. no: 9740.

CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S NAME	TITLE OF STORY	PAGE
ANNIXTER, PAUL	<i>Timberline</i>	9
BATTEN, H. MORTIMER	<i>The Vagabonds</i>	26
BLACKWOOD, ALGERNON	<i>Dudley & Gilderoy</i>	43
CALVERT, W. R.	<i>Grey Fox Goes Back</i>	64
CHALMERS, PATRICK R.	<i>Smoker</i>	86
DAWSON, MAJOR A. J.	<i>Jean and Jack</i>	92
DE LA ROCHE, MAZO	<i>Peter—A Rock</i>	119
GREY, ZANE	<i>Don</i>	141
HAIG-BROWN, RODERICK L.	<i>A Life</i>	172
JAMES, WILL	<i>Midnight</i>	199
JORDAN, HUMFREY	<i>Bumblefoot</i>	221
KEARTON, CHERRY	<i>The Inquisitive Mongoose</i>	262
O'CONNOR, FRANK	<i>Mrs. Canty's Man</i>	279
PENN-SMITH, FRANK	<i>Hang!</i>	290
POULTNEY, C. B.	<i>Pompey</i>	298
ROBERTS, CHARLES G. D.	<i>Do Seek their Meat from God</i>	314

CONTENTS

SALTEN, FELIX	<i>Tasso</i>	323
SETON, ERNEST THOMPSON	<i>Lobo: The King of Currumpaw</i>	334
STERN, G. B.	<i>Toes Unmasked</i>	354
STONEHAM, C. T.	<i>Victims of the Bullet</i>	383
WALPOLE, HUGH	<i>The Whistle</i>	402
WENTER, JOSEF	<i>His Last Adventure</i>	422
WILLIAMSON, HENRY	<i>The Saga of the One-Eyed</i>	443
WRIGHT, SEWELL PEASLEE	<i>Work Dog</i>	458

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The stories in this collection have been specially chosen by their respective authors, whom the Publishers wish to thank for their collaboration and for the permission they have given to reprint their tales in this form.

Acknowledgements are also due to Messrs. J. W. Arrowsmith, Ltd., for agreeing to the republication in this anthology of "The Inquisitive Mongoose" from their volume *My Animal Friendships* by Cherry Kearton; to Messrs. Ernest Benn, Ltd., for "Dudley and Gilderoy" from *Dudley and Gilderoy* by Algernon Blackwood; to Messrs. Chatto and Windus, for "Hang!" from *Hang!* by F. Penn-Smith; to Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., for "Do Seek their Meat from God" from *Some Animal Stories* by C. G. D. Roberts; to Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., for "Lobo" from *Lobo* by Ernest Thompson Seton; to Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd., for "The Whistle" from *All Souls' Night* by Hugh Walpole; to Messrs. Methuen & Co., Ltd., for "Pompey" from *My Dog Pompey* by C. B. Poultney; to Messrs. John Murray, for "Bumblefoot" from *A Few Friends* by Humfrey Jordan; to Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd., for "The Saga of the One-Eyed" from *The Peregrine's Saga* by Henry Williamson; and to Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons for "Midnight" from *Sun Up* by Will James. "Tasso", by Felix Salten, is the copyright of Paul Zsolnay Verlag, Vienna and Berlin.

Title

Author

Accession No.

Call No

BORROWER'S
NO.

ISSUE
DATE

BORROWER'S
NO.

ISSUE
DATE

BY
PAUL ANNIXTER

★

TIMBERLINE

November had brought the first sift of winter snow sweeping across the Sunlight Peaks. A mile and a half up, among the rims, the gale was enormous, doubling in volume with every rising barrier along the upward valleys. At timberline this blast would be almost continuous now for the next five months; it was the force that had given this high country its permanent grotesque aspect, scarring the very face of the cliffs, causing the dwarfed lodge-poles to cling spiderlike to the rocks in twisted attitudes of torment. A tree up here with a trunk two feet thick rose but four or five feet in the air.

Along the sheltered western side of the peaks, two figures came climbing slowly along a jagged game trail, alien dark spots against that grey-and-tawny canvas of the cliffs. They were a wandering pair of silver-tips, and numbered among the very last bears to be found in this far western range. This was well above their customary altitude, for they ranged by choice the lower hills and fir-shadowed valleys, but necessity was driving them this day. For some reason, the fall crop of berries and mast had

PAUL ANNIXTER

all but failed along the western slopes; furthermore, the female grizzly was heavy with young this year and with the time for hibernating close at hand, it devolved upon her and her mate to secure rich strong feeding for the good of the cubs yet unborn.

A half hour before, as the two had peered forth from a stretch of dense down-timber a quarter mile below, they had sighted a band of mountain sheep bouncing single-file down the western face of the peak above. Evidently they were seeking some shelter from the driving storm. The two bears sank noiselessly back into the cover of the dead-falls, then stole around to the narrow game trail, and taking advantage of every outcropping boulder or rock-ledge, began to climb. The wind, of course, was with them, and for all their great bulk and heavy muscles they now moved as soundlessly as cats, twisting, flattening and effacing themselves for moments at a time. Sheep were most difficult and agile prey for the two silver-tips, and scarce twice or thrice in their lifetime had they been favoured with a meal of this rarest of western game. But always in the wild there is the hope of some stroke of fortune, and their empty bellies had given them no rest for days.

As it happened, chance was to favour them this day—a strange quirk of chance indeed. An old male cougar skirting a high ledge a half mile to the south, had also marked the line of sheep crossing the rims, and was stalking them warily from the opposite direction. This master hunter of the peaks followed swiftly along narrow trails where nothing else but the sheep themselves could have found

TIMBERLINE

foothold. Now he was working stealthily downward from the spine of the ridge, toward the rock shelves below where the ten sheep had headed, out of the wind, perfectly camouflaged against the grey and white of the rocks and snow.

For years this particular puma, the largest of his kind in the region, had been the scourge of the Sunlight Range. For a full decade he had held out here against hunters, dogs and rival preyers alike, and during that time he had ceaselessly harassed this band of big horn sheep, cutting them down by slow degrees from nearly thirty to the meagre company of ten that now remained. He was the one enemy of the high country the sheep band had real cause to fear.

It was the old ram leading the other nine who saw him first as he slid over a boulder a hundred feet below. Instantly he rose to his feet and gave the broken bleat that signalled danger to the band; then dropped into space, landing magically on an outcropping knob of rock twelve feet below, and thence bounding to a narrow ledge along which he ran at a dizzy downward angle. The face of the cliff became suddenly relieved by movement as the nine other sheep rose and followed suit. All worked downward from point to point along the rock face, while the cougar followed more cautiously from above, waiting the chance of a safe spring. All unknowingly he was driving the whole band on to the game trail along which the grizzlies were working.

Slithering down rock inclines with a rasp of claws, bringing up teetering on outcropping buttons like a bird

on a swaying bough, the cougar stared down with yellow-eyed hate as they rounded a jutting corner and were lost to sight. A hundred yards down the game trail, the ears and keen wet noses of the two grizzlies had sensed the approach of the band. The trail ahead was so narrow that no animal could turn and flee, and on this they set their hope. Crouching flat and motionless among the rocks, they waited with growing consciousness, knowing that the wind swooping down off the rims was all with them.

Two minutes later the click of a loose stone marked the approach of the band. An old ewe had fallen into the lead. When she was no more than thirty feet away, the male silver-tip suddenly reared from around his rock, and doubling, hurled his bulk forward in three or four incredible lunges. The line of sheep froze on the instant, the hindermost backing to spots where they could turn or drop to other ledges. But the death of the leading ewe was sealed. Even as she poised gauging the pitch over the brink that might bring her to a rock outcrop, the grizzly's sweeping forepaw hurled her out into space. ✕

The old silver-tip leaned out and watched her pitching fall till the body, bucking and sagging like a half-filled bag, brought up on a mile-long rock-slide that tobogganed down to the head of the valley. Then he backed slowly to his mate, and a wider shelf of rock where they could pivot about and descend to the feast. From the rocks far above, the cougar watched them go, an implacable hate mirrored in his yellow-green orbs. It was not the first time he had crossed the trail of this grizzly pair to his detriment. For the killing had cleared the whole

TIMBERLINE

face of the mountain like magic; only a few faint hornlike calls marked the flight of the sheep band. A bit later in the cup of the valley the two silver-tips feasted on their kill. A half hour went by with only the businesslike sound of crunching bones to break the silence. The sheep had been a godsend to them at this time, for it is a serious matter for a she-bear with young to enter the winter sleep in poor condition.

It was the female who first withdrew from the feast. The wind had shifted as they ate, and now belled up along the narrow valley, lifting their shaggy coats, knife-edged with cold. A stinging cold snow rode on its wings and a restless uneasiness became manifest in the she-grizzly. Pivoting about, she shambled to a ledge of rock and stood looking down along the valley's length, curtained now by swirling veils of snow. Her blunt, black-muzzled head swung up and down a few times, swinging slightly at each descent, describing a "U" in the air. She felt the big change in the air; in a few days more winter would have clamped down on the country in earnest. As a general thing she did not bother to hibernate, but ranged the hills throughout the winter with her mate, for the grizzly is almost as well insulated against the cold as his polar cousin. But this year, before the snow grew deep she must seek out a den beneath a tree or rock for the good of her coming family.

She moved over to her mate who was coughing over the wool of the old ewe, and laid her muzzle on his shoulder till he looked up. Low talk then passed between

them, almost inaudible, like the sounds that escape a dog's mouth when he yawns. The male too, tested the rising wind and then with one accord they turned and made their way down the valley. They parted not long afterward in a strip of dense timber near the valley bottom where the she-bear had chosen her winter den beneath the roots of a mighty fallen pine. The pair touched noses for a moment; then, without more adieu, the old male turned and lumbered on down the valley, doubtless to spend a more or less sleepless and solitary winter, stalking whatever game the snow-clad hills might afford. Perhaps when spring broke he would return to seek his mate again.

The female set about digging out a sizable cave for herself beneath the dead tree. By nightfall she was fast asleep in a sheltered den, letting the drifting snow cover her as it would. Two days later the ceaseless mountain storms were howling along the high valley; before a week had passed, the she-bear slept in a cave beneath three feet of drifted snow, secure against the fiercest cold and wind.

Once only in the next two months was her rest broken, and then it was to give birth to three hairless whimpering youngsters. Four hours in all she was awake, coaching her offspring in the baffling act of nursing, then asleep again, conserving every ounce of energy for her young. In usual course, throughout the winter, the cubs would sleep and nurse, growing fat while she fell gaunt and lean. Food was all she need supply, the thick barricade of snow above them would be ample protection, and the rising warmth from her great body could be depended upon to

TIMBERLINE

keep an air hole open to the world above, until the warm thaws of April set them free.

Some eight miles over on the other side of the mountain spur, in a den beneath a jutting rock, there had been another parting of mates that fall, but of a far different nature than the parting of the grizzlies. The big cougar who had unwittingly driven the sheep into the claws of the silver-tips, had parted from his mate after a pitched battle, plain cannibalism being the cause. Like all his breed, the big male cat was not to be trusted with his own offspring, much less in the lean time of clamorous bellies. The female cougar, returning one day from a short trip, had surprised him in the act of infanticide. Though never occupying the same den, the cougar pair had for two seasons hunted amicably together on the same range, but now even this was an impossibility. At least, so the female decreed, for that night she left with her own remaining kit, leaving the old male with a slashed hide, to range the Sunlight Peaks undisturbed. This particular cougar had already stained his soul with murder at the age of three months, having killed and eaten his own sister and bed-mate in the absence of his mother. Since that time he had well lived up to that sanguinary beginning. Like all his kind, stark ferocity was his keynote in the scheme of life. Known to Indians as the "Cat of God" because the signs of his kills are always in evidence though he himself is never seen, he is held in both awe and fear by the primitive mind, and rarely hunted because he is supposed to be in league with the Windego, or great spirit of the wilderness. Among white hunters he is the most hated of mam-

PAUL ANNIXTER

imals because of the wanton butchery he perpetrates among all the defenceless tribes of the forest—sheer killing for the sake of blood-lust.

Government has long set a bounty on his head, and forest rangers and game wardens consider a day well spent when they can track down a cougar with dogs. They know that upward of one hundred and fifty head of sheep and deer are slaughtered annually by this murderer, who recognizes no law of the wilderness.

Such, then, was the character of the big cougar of Sunlight. As for habits, he was crueller and more blood-thirsty than even that little killer the weasel, stealthier and harder to trap than a fox, an ill-tempered recluse and an incurable coward. Beside him the lynx or wild cat was clumsy.

After the departure of his mate, the big male fared well enough for a number of weeks. The hunting of the territory which had long been scarce for him and his family, quite sufficed for one. Also the pair of grizzlies, his only dangerous enemies in the region, had disappeared with the first snows. Down in the valleys the snowshoe rabbits still thronged the thickets; and occasional grouse were to be found in the lower woods. Also in some of the high valleys herded small bands of deer, who were still unfamiliar with the mountain lion's devilish cunning and stalking prowess. After three or four kills, however, these herds left for lower country, peopled by settlers, where the cougar feared to follow. Stealth and surprise were the big cat's game; he disliked travelling far and never attempted to run down any swift-footed quarry, for the cougars are proverbially short-winded.

TIMBERLINE

During the second month of winter, things underwent an abrupt change. The deer already gone from the high country, there came a succession of heavy storms during which the rabbit and bird life of the valleys suddenly disappeared as they sometimes will during a rigorous winter. Perhaps they read signs of the lean time ahead, for at nightfall that same day began a stretch of weather that was long to be remembered in the region. For three days and nights a storm raged down from out the north-west, carving the hard snow of the peaks into weird fantastic shapes. During that time the cougar stuck close to his den and lived on nothing at all. His short close fur did not adapt him to such a cold. On the fourth day, venturing forth, he found no track or sign of bird or beast marking the virgin whiteness for a radius of five miles. Although he stalked ceaselessly all that day, nothing came of it but a wood mouse surprised in one of the lower valleys, which only added the barb of Tantalus to his hunger.

The next day there came another storm on the tail of the first, and, passing, it left behind a cold that was beyond anything the old cougar had known in all his murderous career—a still cold of the higher altitudes. In his prowling that day the giant cat stopped many times to raise his flat cruel head in awe of the unearthly calm that had settled over the peaks. The crackle of the snow carried half a mile in the clear still air.

With these days of famine, the uneasiness of the cougar became desperation. His craving for red meat had grown to an incubus that would neither let him sleep nor rest. Since the first storm, full four feet of dry powdery snow

PAUL ANNIXTER

lay among the mountain slopes, rising to thirty and even fifty feet in the gorges and valleys. And over all this white expanse no sign of a game trail showed. Every meat-eater in the region was now feeling the pressure of famine. From the lower valleys the squalling cry of the dog fox and the far-off yelp of coyotes, told the story, and that night the tawny cat added his hunger cry to the silence—a long-drawn screaming wail that was the epitome of blood-lust and insatiable craving.

Always in other winters he had been able to fall back as a last resource in the lean months on the rabbits that teemed in the lower valleys, but with this supply gone, there was nothing for him to do but haunt the highest peaks on the slim chance of a sheep kill, or remove to some far distant range. The call came distinctly to try his luck on the summits before weakness impaired his hunting, and he started with the fall of dusk.

Up along the treacherous ledges he went at his characteristic gliding crawl, almost as sure-footed here as the sheep themselves. His huge round pads held him up on the surface of the snow, whereas the sheep, he knew, would sink belly-deep. Stark murder and an insatiable blood-madness were mirrored in his yellow eyes.

That night it snowed again, soft and deep, and there came no wind to powder the drifts and sweep the high trails. The going became doubly precarious. In every respect this winter was a fateful and terrible one for all who dwelt in the mountains. For two days the puma wandered along the western slopes of the range and still found no meat. He was weakening fast, gaunt and a bit

insane with famine by the time he crossed the divide.

Up among the high peaks the sheep band had also been suffering for the first time in many years. The snow, which in usual course was swept from the flat tops of the rims by the savage scouring wind, lay now soft and deep, covering all the cured grass on which they subsisted. Not once in twenty years did such a winter give the bighorn cause for worry, but once such conditions set in, there was but one course open—a migration to lower feeding. They despised the low country, but the urge for life was not to be denied.

It was about this time that the old leader of the little band the cougar had fruitlessly stalked two months before, saw that it was useless to wait for a break in the weather, and began leading his following down country.

Early on the morning of the third day of his hunt, the cougar, ranging the spine of the rims, in quest of sheep, first became aware that the quarry had flown. The trail of the nine, only a few hours old, led downward along the western cliffs. The scent was still keen and the hunter moistened his black nose again and again to enjoy more keenly the enticing savour. His sharp curved teeth bared in a soundless snarl and his fierce eyes swept the slopes. It was his first smell of meat in many days; irresistibly he was drawn along the down trail.

About an hour later, still held as if by a magnet on the down trail of the sheep, another scent came to the cougar's nose. Faint and warm it wafted up from the head of a wooded valley, just a taint in the rare air. Only the keenest of even the wet-nosed animals would have detected it at all.

PAUL ANNIXTER

The cougar stopped to raise his head and test the four quarters for a clearer story. This scent—it was very curious—neither sheep nor deer—but warm and stronger than any trail. He turned from the sheep trail and glided in among the trees.

Two minutes later the heavy fur along his spine stiffened and his ears went flat. The scent that came to him now was familiar of old—it spelled grizzly and therefore enemy, for well he knew that the two old silver-tips who had cheated him of his sheep kill in the fall were the last of their kind in these hills. It came up through a tiny hole in the snow, beneath a fallen pine. The crust had frozen and cracked about it, but somewhere beneath that crust was a sleeping bear—with a family.

The cougar knew well the hibernating habits of his old enemy and he had smelled bear cubs before. Viciously he set to work clawing at the crevass, ripping through snow-ice hard as flint. Finally, a big slab tore loose in his heaving claws. He wrenched it back, and crouching, peered down into the dark hole. In the dimness five or six feet below him he saw vaguely the body of the great she-grizzly, sleeping heavily with her three cubs cradled in the curve of her vast bowed legs. The bear was deep in the third month of her long sleep and did not stir, but the cubs were already awake and whimpering. With a wary eye on the huge form of the mother, the cougar slid cautiously into the hole, and one after another in swift succession he tore out the throats of the three cubs. One would have been ample for his needs, but the tawny killer knew not the meaning of restraint. At the first smell and

TIMBERLINE

taste of the fresh blood he fell into that insanity of blood lust which has placed the whole cat tribe outside the law.

The huge brown sleeper stirred uneasily, as if with an evil dream, then relapsed again, for hibernation is not sleep but a low, deathlike torpor. But the preyer, knowing only the strength of those great crushing forepaws, and the demon that rages in the heart of a she-bear with a dead cub, made haste to scramble out of the hole, dragging a slain carcass with him. Had he possessed an ounce of real courage, he might have slain the mother then and there, but blood-lust and ferocity have nothing in common with valour. Not once in his carnal career had the cougar stood ground against a beast that would fight.

For a half hour thereafter the despoiler gorged on the kill. Full three-quarters of a cub, more than twenty pounds of raw meat, he stowed away, before he was appeased. Then deadened by the stupor that follows such feeding, he sought a shelter and slept. There would be ample opportunity later he felt sure, to return for the rest of the kill.

That afternoon, Mart Brenner, a trapper living in one of the lower valleys, noted the circling of ravens up toward the peaks above, and a bit later an eagle swooped downward from the blue. Brenner knew that the meat-eating birds were gathering for a feast, and no inconsiderable one at that. Pricked by curiosity, he started up trail to investigate. An hour later he came upon the remains of two grizzly cubs in the snow, and nearby found the opening to a deep den beneath a fallen tree. Within the

PAUL ANNIXTER

den was another dead cub, and leading from the hole opening was the trail of a huge grizzly, less than an hour old. That trail led up to the mountain, following the tangled tracks a huge cougar had made.

The whole story was plain to Brenner's practised eye. The big cougar of Sunlight had come upon the winter's den of a she-grizzly and slaughtered her young while she slept, and the mother bear, awakened by the cold, had emerged and taken up the trail of vengeance. Brenner wished her luck. In his ten years among the hills he had seen many a bloody trace of the big cat's work, and was of a mind now to enter the hunt himself and rid the range for all time of the arch-murderer. Heavy with the hot meat of his kill, the puma would be in no condition for any prolonged flight through heavy snow. On the impulse Brenner hastened back along the down trail to get his dogs and his snowshoes.

It was some three hours after the slayer had departed before the knife-edged cold accomplished its work of rousing the she-grizzly from her torpor. A low heartrending sound, between a bawl and a growl, issued from the den; then up out of the hole in the snow the mother reared her gaunt brown bulk. Over it she stood swaying, her little, deep-sunken eyes showing red as she swung her head about into the four quarters. Again the cry burst forth, ending in a bleat that held something of elemental agony.

Now she picked up the scent and shambled away on the trail the puma had left. Her hide hung loose now on her

TIMBERLINE

gaunt frame, and though she had tasted no food for months, inexhaustible stores of energy were still in her great sliding muscles that stood out on limbs from which the cubs had nursed every ounce of fat. Still, she was very far from the limit of her power. Nothing but death could turn her from the killer's trail.

The cougar, from a retreat among the rocks, glanced down sleepily a few minutes later and saw the dark form of the avenger move silently out from among the trees. Head swung low, nose close to the trail, she was ascending the valley at her tireless shuffling gait.

The cougar's fangs bared in a soundless snarl and the hide crawled along his spine at the sight. Then he streaked upward along a rock ledge toward the more inaccessible peaks above. He had little doubt but that he could elude the clumsy trailer, but he had yet to learn of the deathless persistence of a she-bear with a dead cub. An hour later he had crossed over a spur of the mountain and circled again, completing a tortuous and tangled circle, back to his own ascending trail. There he crouched to sniff at the huge footprints of the grizzly—full sixteen by twenty inches each. Suddenly he flattened himself to a tawny blot beside a rock and his lips writhed back afreash at what he saw.

Up along the side of the spur and far to the right, came the bent figure of a man with two white and brindle hounds held on a leash. The cougar glared downward a full minute with a sinister intentness, chilled by a premonitory breath of fear. Man and dogs, these were his deadly enemies, but he knew not yet whether it was his

PAUL ANNIXTER

own trail or the grizzly's the man was on. Desperation gripped his craven spirit as he turned and streaked once more for the high peaks, recrossing his former trail higher up the slope.

Later, from a grey crag a quarter of a mile above tree line, he heard the first chilling notes of the hounds working upward along the spur and he knew then for certain that it was his own trail they were on. They were coming swiftly and had not even paused over the trail of the she-bear farther down.

Turning, the puma struck upward among the rocks toward a narrow sheep trail that would drop him down over the rims to the eastern slope of Sunlight. He ran his best now, but the music of the hounds was gaining. Two minutes later, rounding an outjut on the narrow two-foot trail, the killer's blood turned suddenly to water. Coming toward him along the ledge from below was the she-grizzly herself. Becoming confused over the tangled trail he had left among the rocks, she had finally caught a glimpse of him as he streaked up the bare slopes above her, and clambering straight up the mountain face, she had come out on the same game trail the cougar had chosen for escape. . . .

The big cat flattened himself, hissing. Already the dogs were yapping on the upward trail along the cliff edge. Now they must be filing up the sheep trail behind him. Their yelps pierced the cougar through and through; death for him in every one of them, with the man close behind and death coming toward him fifty feet ahead. . . . Plainly Nature had chosen this grim, rockgirt setting,

the scene of so many of the cougar's sheep-kills, to stage a final bit of drama of her own.

The she-bear had seen him now. Half-risen on her hindquarters, she flung herself forward in a one-pointed madness to annihilate the sinister crouching form of the cat. Fear muddled the cougar's wits in that pigeon-holed moment.

He could not hope to worst the avenging mother, but he was five times the weight and strength of either of the oncoming dogs. He might have sped back along the ledge and with two lightning strokes of his armoured paws swept those puny pursuers into oblivion, but the requisite courage for such an attack failed him. Instead he crouched until the dogs came in sight from the rear, clinging to life till the last desperate moment. Then he made one insane attempt to scale the sheer rock face of the cliff. His bound carried him fifteen feet upward, to a tiny outcrop in the rock. There he clung for a moment or two, struggling to get a purchase with his hind feet. Then hissing and snarling he fell back, his claws rasping down the face of the rock.

As he landed on the ledge, it was the avenging mother bear who struck the death blow. Her mighty forearm descended in a crushing impact that sent the killer of her cubs hurtling out into space along the dizzy route he had sent so many mountain sheep.

Mart Brenner, puffing up the last rise a few minutes behind his dogs, glimpsed the tawny body as it pitched over the thousand foot brink to the gorge below, and knew that justice had been done. There is a certain balance to things, even in animal land.

BY
H. MORTIMER BATTEN

★

THE VAGABONDS

It was a starless, breathless night in late August, and at the wood edge, overlooking the quiet valley with its few twinkling lights, a man crouched under the shadow of a mountain ash—a man whose attire stamped him a nomad, a vagabond, or as most people would incorrectly have called him, a gypsy. He was squatting in an attitude of watchfulness, his eyes fixed on the patch of greensward opposite, while one of his hands rested on a little wire-haired terrier at his feet. Vap called her a Border terrier, but whatever she was she was remarkable neither for weight of limb nor terribleness of aspect, though clearly she possessed a power greater than these. One knew as one looked at her that Rag might live where the mighty would starve.

Thump, thump, thump! The sound seemed immensely loud on the night stillness, then suddenly something moved on the open space ahead. There was a suggestion of terrific struggling out in the centre of the greensward, and Vap the vagabond rose, strode quietly and quickly across, took a rabbit from the net stretched over the warren, dexter-

THE VAGABONDS

ously culminated its career, and strode back to his original statuelike pose.

Scarcely was all quiet again when the terrier uttered the faintest of faint growls. The moocher caught her muzzle, lowered his head in an attitude of intent alertness. Then in an instant a figure slipped round from the back of the very tree by which he crouched—a policeman, my hat! Vap turned to bolt in the opposite direction, but only to find a second figure barring the way—one whom he instantly recognized by its baggy breeches and bulging jacket pockets.

Now Vap was a fighting man, an order of things which had never been of any direct benefit to him. Clearly he was caught, and had he been wise rather than reckless he would have thrown up the sponge. Instead he thrust his fingers into his mouth and whistled shrilly—the signal to his campmates to come along and lend a hand.

Nor was that all. It merely intimated to his captors that it was time to act, and Vap was ready for them. But he made a great mistake in breaking that keeper's nose, and in kicking the constable's shins, for clearly he was out-classed and outnumbered.

In thirty seconds Vap was staggering dazedly, neatly handcuffed, and without awaiting further developments his captors frog-marched him off, both of them kicking out at the terrier which already had made her teeth meet in the fleshy parts of their legs.

As a matter of fact, Vap's campmates had not heard his signal; word had reached them some hours ago that their camp was to be raided, so they had promptly pulled out—

vamoosed, leaving various signs which Vap, on his return, would be able to read and follow.

At the bend of the road, half a mile away, a car was waiting without lights, and into it they bundled the blubbering, cursing Vap.

They did not invite Rag to enter, and one can scarcely wonder at it. They left her at the roadside, bristling and snarling, and the car moved off.

Rag, in a quandary as to what to do, fell in behind, racing after the vehicle, but in a very few seconds the little red tail lamp, becoming smaller and smaller, finally dwindled from view. Rag was alone with the night and with the consciousness that something terrible had befallen the tousle-headed god she worshipped!

So she pulled up short, as though she had remembered something, and stood for a moment undecided as to which way to turn. It had been part of her training always to go back to the original point of activity after a dust-up of this kind—to return furtively, looking out for strangers, and, if none was about, there to await the reappearance of her friends.

So now she trotted briskly back to the warren under the mountain ash, where she found the ferret bounding about, having successfully ousted all the rightful owners of the burrow.

Rag and that ferret knew each other. They had been brought up as playmates, as it were, and the ferret, as was usual on these occasions, was muzzled. Rag knew exactly what to do. She trotted up to the ferret, picked him up

THE VAGABONDS

gently in her jaws, and turned with him into a dense thicket, where she curled herself up, the ferret cosily tucked between her forelegs. The seductive warmth of her body kept the little animal quiet, for this, indeed, was part of his training, too, under the persuasive and understanding guidance of Vap. So the two dozed and waited—waited for Vap's return.

But Vap was not likely to return for many, many days. He was not a first offender, nor was this the first occasion on which he had kicked a policeman's kneecap out of place. Vap was in for several days' change, if not combined with rest.

So the dawn light found them, both decidedly hungry, and Rag no little troubled in her mind. She got up and stretched herself, then, as the ferret ambled off, she picked him up again, and set off toward camp. The ferret kicked at first, and tried to bite her, but could not on account of his muzzle. Ten minutes later they emerged at the edge of the common, but the caravans were gone!

Still dutifully carrying her little charge, Rag trotted round, searching for the scent of her master, and so she learned that he had not accompanied the caravans. They had gone off without him, or she would have trailed them down without difficulty. Now her training told her that the only thing to do was to return to the place where last she had seen him, so back she went, still carrying the wretched ferret in her jaws.

There, peering cautiously through the undergrowth, Rag saw three men collecting the net and the pegs belonging to her master. She took good care not to show herself,

H. MORTIMER BATTEN

for the biggest of the three, with the bandaged face, was one of the gentlemen whom she had tasted last night. Moreover, she knew his type—the breed of gentleman Rag and her master took good care to shun when out on their own.

Rag watched them off the premises; the ferret now saturated with saliva, wriggled irritably in her jaws. He was her charge; it was up to her to look after him till Vap came back, but when the men were gone she dropped him among the leaves to relieve her aching mouth.

The ferret was hungry and it happened that Rag dropped him at the mouth of a hole in the roots of a giant beech. So, into the hole he promptly vanished, his tail bushed out like a bottle brush, while Rag stood gazing after him with an expression of—"What on earth will I do with the beast?"

The answer came in a second or two, for, from the mouth of an adjacent hole, there darted a squirrel, hurling abuse over his shoulder. Rag was upon him in a jiffy, and so, by the aid of her little charge, she obtained her needed breakfast.

Dogs are not slow in putting two and two together, and Rag was among the wisest of her race. The ferret came out, and she would gladly have shared the meal with him, but alas, he, poor little fellow, was muzzled! He strove hard to pick up his share, but neither he nor his dumb comrade could understand.

They slept together most of the day, but when dusk brought the wood pigeons home to roost, there was no more sleep for either of them.

THE VAGABONDS

Nip, the ferret, was really hungry now, and did his best to get away, so as the darkness settled Rag picked him up again, and set off down the wood, evidently with some fixed destination in view. It was a wonderful wood, clothing the whole mountain face for many miles. There were dense fir patches, thickets of bracken and brier, birch swamps, and rounded, leaf-strewn beech groves—to say nothing of the rugged patches where the boulders rested one upon another, each boulder draped with ferns and mosses, forming a gigantic underground labyrinth, where Brock, the badger, still held his own, as for ages past. Such was the land in which the two little vagabonds found themselves stranded—a land good to behold, affording, with its vast variety, a fitting home for almost every kind of wild beast this land can boast, from the tiny shrew to the prong-horned roe-deer.

Down to the river edge Rag went, and the river, like the wood, was a place of infinite variety—still, dreamy flats, where the foam flakes drifted idly, and where Lutra, the otter, moved in playful plenty, waiting for the kingly fish that voyaged from the sea; tumultuous rapids, where Quash, the keen-eyed heron, stood sentinel-like in the gloom, and hissing, vault-like caldrons, in the shadowy depths of which the white-fronted dipper reared her merry brood. And everywhere were the water voles—boring their tunnels high up into the wood, and water voles, Rag knew, were very excellent to eat. So she sought out one of their burrows, and at the mouth of it she dropped Nip—with a full understanding as to what she was doing.

Nor was the plan unsuccessful. There were many voles in that burrow—a whole family of them—and Nip burst in upon them like a devil among the tailors. They had no difficulty in evading him, for he was muzzled, but on the leaf mould without, Rag was waiting. She nailed them one by one, quick as an adder, and when the last came out, there was food enough for three dogs, and three times as many ferrets.

But again Nip could not feed. He tore frantically at his muzzle, rubbed it against the tree roots, but it was impossible to rid himself of the hateful thing. Rag ate her fill, then, true to her sex, she buried what remained for future use. She never went back for it, but that was because the possible period of scarcity, which the feminine mind ever contemplates, never came for her.

That was not a happy night, for Nip was too hungry to rest, and kept on scratching Rag's face and wriggling. She carried him about from point to point, searching chiefly for her master. Several times she shook Nip for his restlessness, snarling angrily, but he did not appear to mind in the least. He was indefatigable—that ferret! This much good the experience did—it made Nip still more used to being carried. He no longer tried to bite Rag, because he had learned by repeated failures that he could not do so. Thus, he came to regard being carried in a wet, hot mouth as one of the inevitable disadvantages of life, and in this way the muzzle was a blessing.

Next day Nip frayed through the strand of cord which bound his jaws, and so that misery came to an end. He

THE VAGABONDS

found a frog and ate it, then he darted in among the rocks, and slew a young rabbit that could not escape him. The other got out, to be pounced upon by Rag, and thus both of them obtained a meal.

After the manner of his kind, Nip feasted underground, and would have slept there, but that he recalled the friendly warmth of his comrade's body. So he emerged from the burrow, and they licked each other's nose, after which Rag picked him up, and carried him to a cosy bed of leaves deep in a brier thicket, where they slept together till darkness fell.

So began what was surely a partnership more strange than that of the tiger and the jackal—a partnership between two creatures having but one thing in common, a knowledge of man's ownership. Both of them belonged to Vap, and thereby they were united, working each for itself, yet each for the other. But their coming and their going was decided by the superior brain of the two. Whether they really loved each other it is hard to say, yet one thing is certain—that Nip would have deserted Rag, but that he loved her warmth.

Rag, for her part, had no thought of deserting Nip. True that she used him mechanically to achieve her own ends, yet at the back of her mind lurked the knowledge that it was her duty to the man she worshipped to keep and guard him. In due course this sense may have died, but by that time it had become force of habit to carry Nip about. They had many differences of opinion; often they squabbled, and Nip bit her, but Rag had been trained never to bite Nip. He, in a sense, was sacred—sacred to her

master's possession. She knew just how to handle him, pinning him down between her forepaws, or shaking him, and the ferret seemed to understand that he had better not carry the quarrel too far. True, too, that Rag profited by the partnership more than Nip did, for she used him to hunt for her, quite incidentally for himself, and without him she might have fared badly even in that land of plenty, where at the worst Nip could have made out quite well on the frogs and other cold-blooded things which everywhere were numerous; yet, as we shall see, the benefit was mutual, and, united, both were able to hold on to an existence which otherwise would have slipped away.

The keeper was not slow in finding out that some new element was at work in a direction detrimental to his interests, and from that day on he was much puzzled. He found the tracks of a creature he took to be a fox, which did most of the damage, but how that fox succeeded in killing five rabbits outside one burrow in a single night, he could not make out. One day he discovered a scratching near to a water-vole labyrinth, and rooting up the earth with his stick he found five buried water voles, yet the burrow from which the voles had come, clearly indicated by the fluff that littered the ground, had not been torn open!

Determined to get to the root of the mystery, he set vermin traps everywhere—at the rabbit burrows, at the water-vole burrows, at the drinking place where the badgers and the foxes went to slake their thirst.

Rag knew more about traps than the keeper himself, and having located one or two of them she kept her nos-

THE VAGABONDS

trils alert for the scents of man and steel, forsaking those parts of the wood where danger seemed most prevalent, and carrying Nip with her. Nip, on the other hand, cared not a straw for traps or anything else, so that, in spite of Rag's care, he one night ran foul of one of these devilish contrivances.

There he was, at the mouth of the rabbit burrow, bristling and cursing, both forepaws fast in the deadly jaws. Rag went to his aid, and he bit her. She pinned him down, caught the trap in her jaws, and dragged it out. The device was firmly pegged, and she could not pull it up, so, desperate with her hatred of the thing, she fell to gnawing the peg above the ground. It was of green hazel, and yielded readily to her jaws, so that in a few minutes the ground was littered with splinters, and the trap was free.

Rag picked up the trap with the ferret still in it, and as she had carried Nip alone, so now she carried Nip and the trap, dragging the dangling chain. She carried him to a place of safety and laid him down. He jabbered and cursed and struggled to free himself, till, alarmed at the noise he made, she carried him elsewhere, and so on and on, from place to place, throughout the wretched day that followed. Several times she scratched holes and buried the trap, carefully trampling it in, diligently covering the chain, hoping in this way to get rid of the thing, but still the trap and Nip remained united.

When dusk came she carried him out into the open, for clearly there was no comfort here in the wood, and crossing the pasture a herd of bullocks saw them and pursued, curious at the sight of the yellow dog with its mysterious

H. MORTIMER BATTEN

burden. Rag could not make good progress with her heavy load, and frightened though she was it never occurred to her to forsake her luckless little comrade. She carried him until the bullocks surrounded her, hiving at her with their sharp horns, then she turned savagely at bay, charging one, then another.

But Rag could not fight the whole herd, and as she drove one back another ambled up to sniff the curious little creature in the trap. They pranced all round with lowered heads and tails erect, and so it came about that good fortune came in a strange and unexpected way. One of the bullocks placed its huge splayed hoof on the trap, depressing the spring so that the jaws fell apart, and instantly Nip was free.

He turned, with bleeding forepaws, to attack the nearest bullock, but Rag snatched him up, and in a minute the hostile cattle were far enough away. Rag sat fiery-eyed on the wall top, the ferret still between her jaws, and rumbled tiger-like thunder at them; then, flattened like a fox carrying its booty, she slid away into the wood. And on the day following, the keeper was confronted with the greatest mystery of all.

Rag's fidelity was more by way of being a fidelity to the cause for which she lived than directly to her dumb little friend. It was part of her wild training to be suspicious of all men save her master, and now, amidst her wild settings, that characteristic quickly developed.

Russet and foxlike by nature's choice, she became more and more foxlike in character, and had the keeper known

THE VAGABONDS

it, the cause of his bewilderment often lay quite near to him as he passed by, watching him amber-eyed from the shadows, and knowing well that her colour matched the fading autumn leaves. She acquired the characteristic of walking like a fox, instead of trotting like a dog, and so she left her tracks in a neat, straight line, indistinguishable from those of Reynard. Often she saw that last-named gentleman coming and going, and she never lived down her hatred and distrust of him. Wolf she might become—but never fox, save in similarity of habits, cultivated by similar environment.

Rag was wise, as was Reynard himself, and the two simply avoided meeting each other. When one saw or heard the other, that one would move to the windward side so as to give the other its body scent, passing each other by in assumed unconsciousness of each other's presence.

Other woodland people Rag came to know—and they to know her, the strange outlaw from man's threshold, who carried always the hateful ferret in her jaws. There was Lutra, the otter, who lived for fishing, and who, perhaps the most formidable of all, was among the most peaceful—now in the Moon of Plenty. There was Brock, the badger, who bore straight ahead and expected everyone to get out of his way. If they did not choose to get out of his way he ambled straight on just the same, and when he showed his teeth they no longer disputed his right of passage. Like a surly old man who loved his beer and his pipe, was Brock. *74*

Then among the smaller folk, there was Unk-Wa, the

urchin, who trickled about on invisible legs, and who, when spoken to, twitched into an impregnable ball, and remained thus till he tired of it—usually about a minute—when, like Brock, he moved straight on, and—look out for your nose! And the smaller still—those to whom Nip belonged—perhaps the less said about them the better! They asked no quarter and paid none—save in the price of blood.

All these folk Rag knew, and had sense enough not to quarrel with them, but it was not so with Nip. He would have quarrelled with a rhinoceros, or as readily he would have turned and fought fire. Lucky for him it was, indeed, that Rag carried him from hunting ground to hunting ground, and that moreover, she *chose* his hunting grounds.

Yet the row came in the end, as it was bound to do. One day thousands of rats—huge, fighting house rats, drifted into the wood. They came in an invading army, driving the rabbits from their strongholds, and at night-time one heard the plaintive screaming of small birds, caught in the thickets by the invaders. The migrants took the river edge by storm, and behind them came others of another race—following at the heels of the army, as the dolphins follow the herrings, as the wolves follow the migrating caribou.

Nip went into the rocks among the rats, and for an hour he *lived*, fight after fight of bloody glory, leaving the dark and murky corridors strewn with the dead and dying. So he came face to face with the followers—those who hated all, save their own race, and there were many of them.

Rag, waiting patiently above, saw nothing of that des-

THE VAGABONDS

perate tussle underground, but at length she saw Nip, tottering out into the sunshine, carrying a wounded weasel in his jaws. He was covered with blood from head to foot, and another weasel, bristling and snatching, had him by the shoulder.

Rag ran in, spoiling for a fight. There was a snap and a shake, and the atmosphere was momentarily cleared—only momentarily. Suddenly a sickening reek of musk filled the air, for the weasels, seeing the dog, had let loose their musk fumes, which they never use when fighting among themselves. Rag was stifled and sickened, and looking up she saw weasels—many weasels, an unbelievable number of weasels, bounding toward her from every point of the compass. They snarled at her from the grassy shelves, they poured forth from the crevices among the rocks, and Rag was startled by the unexpected suddenness of it all.

Not long did she dally. That awful reek of musk was too much for any self-respecting dog. Snap, slash, snap, went her jaws, then catching up her little charge she bounded off.

Nip would readily have gone back and done the same thing over again, though as a matter of fact he was so sorely injured that he never recovered from the awful mauling he had received. During the days that followed he lost his appetite, and with it his keenness. One side of his neck began to swell, and he seemed only to wish to sleep, curled up with Rag.

The leaves were drifting earthward now with a multi-

tudinous whispering, while the spirits of winter held their ghostly dances around the beech boles. The season of short days and long nights was at hand—the season of cold and ice, or of the pitiless drip-drip-drip, which is more cruel even than the ice.

What became of the manifold wild life of the wood with the dawning of that first cruel frost? The rabbit thousands sought the sandy pastures, and the wood knew them no more. Unk-Wa and Brock simply disappeared; Lutra voyaged upstream in pursuit of the salmon; Reynard sought the greater heights where the white hare millions live, and even the mice seemed no longer to exist. Thus Rag and her little comrade, both becoming weaker every day, found themselves alone with the hunger and desolation, and with the cold, inexorable snows to betray their coming and their going.

It is always so in the North—no half season. From summer to winter it is but one step. Summer—winter—summer, and with the winter as her foe, Rag stood alone.

Yes, alone, for Nip was so weak and tired that he would not hunt. What little food he required was gleaned from what little Rag could get—insufficient to keep herself alive. And with her growing hunger, she could no longer resist the cold. Her feet began to swell, she shivered, only her nose was hot—so hot that it felt like a burning coal, leading her everywhere. Soon she could hardly drag herself about, and little Nip, now a mere bag of bones, felt heavy in her jaws.

Yet, faithful unto death, faithful to the cause, the cause now almost forgotten, though the religion of it lived on,

THE VAGABONDS

she still held tight to her comrade. Perhaps she knew that he was dying, perhaps she realized that she, too, was simply fading out of existence, as the squirrels had faded from the trees, as the sunshine had faded from the braes.

Yet, in her innermost memory, lingered impressions that were very dear to her—visions of bright camp fires, her wonder of which, as she looked into them, had never ceased to find reflection in her gaze; of ruddy human figures, whose caresses were richer than gold, and almost as rare; and beyond the dark outline of munching horses, moving in the outer gloom, and the rich, sweet scent of cooking foods, mingled with the balsam smoke. Ah, she was hungry for it! But over and above all rose the ruddy countenance of the man whom she had served—her god.

And so, cold, starving, Rag realized at last that he would never come. She took little Nip in her jaws, and carried him to the warren by the mountain ash for a last wistful search, but Vap was not there. She pressed on—on to the white highway, fearful of no man now, for here she was not trespassing. This was her birthright—the white highway! She trotted slowly on, occasionally resting little Nip, who simply lay and blinked and shivered where she had laid him. For nine long weeks they had been partners, but now little Nip was spent. The spark of life was fading fast. The desire to live was gone. Only man's understanding help could save him.

They passed the keeper on the way—passed him on the other side. He raised his hat and stared; he called after them and muttered. And when Rag looked round, half a

mile away, he was still staring after them. For him it meant a mystery cleared by a mystery more profound.

So, to the place where the motor car had rested, and on, still on in pursuit of it, now nine weeks later, past the keeper's house, past the constabulary, then on through another arm of the wood, still by the broad highway, and so across the windswept heights, where many a tired voyager had fared before them—led by a will-o'-the-wisp which surely would guide them nowhere!

Something was moving toward them, a mere speck in the distance, coming slowly on. A line of creaking caravans, led by an old white horse and a donkey in the harness beside it—each contributing its share, great or small, to the fulfilment of life's daily load. And leaning through the window of the caravan was a young man of ruddy countenance.

He removed the clay pipe from his jaws, and stared with eyes that were accustomed to the great distances. An oath, pathetic in its utter irrelevance, broke from his lips, and leaping from the caravan he ran ahead toward the little tottering wayfarer, which carried something in its jaws.

"Rag! My dog, Rag!" There was pride and tenderness in the coarse, husky voice. "My dog, Rag!"

And Rag laid her burden at his feet, and looked up into his eyes, as you and I, pray God, may some day look into the eyes of our Supreme Pilot—"My General, I have done my best!"

BY
ALGERNON BLACKWOOD



DUDLEY & GILDEROY

A sudden unexpected sweetness stole over the world that morning in early March. It was as though a day, weary of waiting for its fun and glory, had hopped backwards out of its proper place in May. There was an unwonted softness in the air, a radiance of daffodils, a sound of singing. And with this sweetness about dawn came an invitation to adventure. The blood, even in sleep, ran faster.

The country house in Kent, dreaming among its well-kept gardens, was aware of it, although it gave no demonstrable proof. Too sedate and well-bred to wear its heart upon its sleeve, it yet knew a faint tremor through its ancient timbers. The Manor House, of course, was never taken by surprise; but the garden, romping through every wind-torn spring despite Head Gardeners, registered the thrill. The thrushes noticed it, slipping a wilder whistle through their song, and recent arrivals from Africa followed their example. That "wet, bird-haunted English lawn" missed nothing of importance that came at sunrise, before the noisy humans were abroad to smudge the sen-

sitive beauty. And thus it was that even the back-lawn knew. A flock of those brave things that "come before the swallow dares and take the winds of March with beauty", these also were aware of the sudden sweetness in the air. That their golden heads turned towards the Manor House is certain. Four keen, wide-open eyes, at any rate, observed them.

Something, apparently, was astir at the unearthly hour of 5.30 a.m., though it was not the human occupants of the Elizabethan building, and assuredly not the servants. Colonel Sir Arthur and his Lady still slept audibly; Molly, their thirteen year old daughter, at the other end of the house, made no move; the younger children, lying in crumpled heaps, equally held steady; the French Governess showed no symptom of *élan*; and the staff, as already mentioned, gave no sign. Yet in the room containing the four keen eyes the message of adventure was recognized and accepted, accepted moreover audibly. Through the window, opened two inches at the top, a strange while not unmusical voice greeted the magic with a couple of words that were distinctly uttered:

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" floated down across the quiet lawns and flower-beds, though no letter to the press had yet announced the arrival of the migrant. "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" the odd voice repeated like an echo. It was not quite the authentic note of the romantic robber-bird, nor was it quite the call of a mechanical clock. It was an individual sound.

The Day Nursery, whence it proceeded, lying away from the rest of the house in the eastern wing, held at this

DUDLEY & GILDEROY

early hour two occupants, neither of whom slept; one, a biped, denizen of the air; the other a quadruped, denizen of the world. The speaker was a West African Grey Parrot, a King Grey Parrot, to give him his full title, with red feathers among the grey, and his name was Dudley; the other was a common red-haired cat with a flat-topped skull, and his name was Gilderoy. Dudley belonged to Molly, Gilderoy to himself, and the Day Nursery was their home, the parrot having occupied it for years, the cat for months. It was, at any rate, their headquarters, and a headquarters, sufficiently prolonged, becomes eventually a home. The two animals were very great friends. In appearance, Dudley was dignified, solemn, austere, aristocratic, his sleek feathers glistened, he was extremely *soigné*. Gilderoy was—otherwise.

It was to Dudley and Gilderoy that the invitation to adventure came at the hour of 5.30 a.m. on this sunshiny March morning, and when it came Dudley, as usual, was sedately balanced in the middle of his perch in his big handsome cage, while Gilderoy was just rousing himself from an untidy red ball on the carpet immediately below the table. His head was cocked, his torn ears pointed, his eyes, including the patched one that gave him an appearance of squinting, were wide open. His attitude to his feathered friend was significant—he looked up. While not obsequious, since a cat may assuredly look at a King Parrot, his gaze was respectful and interested. The parrot, on the other hand, though aware he was being stared at, did not return the stare. He looked nowhere in particular.

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

He gazed into space, his face expressionless. His mind, however, was not idle. He was listening.

Each animal, that is, used his predominant faculty, Dudley his acute, amazing ears, Gilderoy his all-seeing, uncanny eyes. What, between them, was neither heard nor seen was usually negligible.

Now Dudley, it must be admitted, was certainly worth looking at. Having lived so many years in the family, he was part of the household, where he was well-fed, well-cared for and well-loved, especially by his owner, Molly. He knew by heart what Molly thought about him, accepting in his modest way all the great qualities she audibly attributed to him. He especially noted the nice, wonderful things she said, about his mind, his soul, his work, for instance. He also knew, since the child studied the book audibly year by year, exactly what Professor Greene thought about him as related in *The Grey Parrot, How to Manage It*. If occasionally he disagreed, audibly, with Professor Greene, he was never at loggerheads with Molly. Greene he sometimes could have nipped, Molly he only kissed. For Molly recognized his greatness. Aware of his sublimity, sure that he was unfathomably wise, "a noble fellow", she was never tired of telling him so.

It was quite natural, therefore, that Dudley knew he was worth looking at this early March morning, as Gilderoy, stretching his skinny legs, peeped up at him. Likewise, he knew that his quadruped friend considered him worth looking at. If he did not move, it was because he already stood in the mathematical centre of his perch, and at the furthest spot from the wide-spaced bars. Remaining

motionless as marble, this being the least succulent stone he could think of, he watched Gilderoy steadily with one bright, glassy eye.

Gilderoy, meanwhile, innocent of all wickedness, proceeded to wash. He was evidently in an affectionate and friendly mood. He was peaceably inclined. For, while he washed, he fell to purring softly, and Dudley, noticing the sound though giving no sign that he did so, presently waddled awkwardly along his perch in his best sideways shuffle and began to peck delicately at his seedbox. He looked, using Molly's words, marvellous, lovely, adorable, and his grace of movement was, he knew quite well, incomparable.

The two pets, thus, betrayed certain of their characteristics, respectively, at the very opening of the coming adventure, and before anything unusual happened at all. Dudley was wise, cautious, critical, philosophical, and as inordinately vain as a great soul has the right to be; Gilderoy, opportunist and *arriviste*, took what came in life, making use of a world he cared nothing about. Aloof, independent, impervious to suggestion, his feeling towards humanity, where Dudley's attitude was one of kindly pity, held a slight disdain. If the parrot was sagacious, tolerant, immensely experienced, his friend, to put it bluntly, was an unprincipled adventurer. Dudley gave it to be understood plainly that what he did not know was not worth knowing; Gilderoy, whose life and nature were one huge secret, gave to be understood—nothing.

Their friendship was at once a puzzle and delight, both

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

to themselves and others. The parrot had not always appreciated the cat, whose first arrival in the family, indeed, he had deliberately ignored. Somehow the beast did not look what Dudley called "qui' ri' ". Gilderoy's appearance certainly left much to be desired. Lean to scragginess, his red coat was shabby. A patch of colour over one side of his flat face gave the impression that one eye looked elsewhere. The flat face, too, could bulge grotesquely when he was excited. Both ears were torn into serrated edges. His whiskers sprayed ungracefully. He was, the Nursery decided, as "common as they make 'em", a phrase Dudley easily mastered, and he wore invariably an unpleasantly hungry look. It was some time, therefore, before the sagacious King Parrot included him in his small circle of trusted friends, a circle the Vicar, for instance, had never entered. And even now, as already seen, his love was tempered by a slight occasional anxiety, due to the fact that he, Dudley, must seem uncommonly appetizing at moments. He took his precautions at the moments. Apart, however, from this touch of insecurity, he adored his friend, though, as will appear later, he could not always approve of him.

Gilderoy, on his part, felt for the King Parrot, a sincere friendship that included a touch of respect as well. Though not, it seems, accepting the bird's own valuation of himself, he admitted to some indecipherable superiority in him, such perhaps as a quadruped might feel towards a creature that can use the air. He certainly looked up to him. Towards his grim iron mandibles he showed a hint of reverence; they frightened him. Dudley, however, he

had soon decided, was old and tough, how old neither he nor anyone else ever knew, how tough he did not ever mean to know. The cat must be acquitted of mere appetite. All great friendships possess deep reserves, and with both cat and parrot these reserves included the delicate point of age. The past was also thus excluded, Gilderoy rarely referring to his earlier life, Dudley being equally reticent about his own. Each respected, as it were, his friend's wild oats.

One important matter, however, while personal in a very intimate sense, was not included in this reserve—the matter of sex. It affected, chiefly, the parrot: Was Dudley a male or female “King” Parrot? Gilderoy, the family as well, remained inquisitive but uninformed, and if Dudley himself knew he declined to disclose his secret. It was often suggested—by the cat, for instance—that he did not know himself. The mystery, at any rate, was left unsolved till the appointed hour; and Gilderoy, in no faintest doubt about his own sex, used his knowledge to set off against the other's superiority.

For he rather resented this superiority. He twitted his friend occasionally. “I have had families,” he boasted, strutting with tail proudly erect. To which Dudley's only comment, too cautious to commit himself, was a plain “Ah!” followed by certain sea-faring nouns and adjectives which may be indicated by “——!” For, in addition to a very large vocabulary and assortment of voices, he possessed the inestimable gift that he could utter “language” so beautifully that it sounded what her ladyship's maid called “reely naice”. His “Ah! ——!” given invar-

iably in the Vicar's voice was thus a peculiarly effective comment, as comments go.

On this particular morning, his ears noting the sparkling message of adventure, he had used Molly's silvery tones. His "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" was, in fact, a signal to his friend on the carpet that something unusual was in the air, and that it was time to be up and doing.

Gilderoy's reply was to stop his washing. He leaped soundlessly upon the table and gazed fixedly at the parrot's smooth and glistening back as the bird pecked delicately at the tiny seeds with his great dark beak. The green eyes held no particular expression, unless perhaps a glint of admiration; he sat quietly staring at the sleek grey back. The bird indifferently continued his early snack, for in any case he always knew what went on behind him.

This pleasant scene remained undisturbed for some minutes. The least acute observer must have realized the subtle understanding sympathy that existed between the two creatures; the intimacy and affection were obvious. Apart from the slight hint of insecurity already referred to—the caution of the parrot, the suggestion of hooliganism in the cat—the friendship was established upon bedrock. "Deathless friends," Molly had described them, and Dudley accepted the phrase in his big way, as for years he had accepted all the complimentary things Molly said about him. For years he had absorbed like blotting paper her flood of generous praise. His great little heart swelled to bursting with the fine qualities and powers she attributed to him—in his hearing. He learned them by heart, indeed. It cost him as little effort to remember

"deathless friendship", as that his occasional long silences were due to absorption in the profoundest problems of philosophy and life because he was "at Work".

It was after some five minutes of breakfast that he presently broke in with a further remark, but this time not an audible remark. Both creatures were adept in the art of creating an impression, of conveying meaning by silence, attitude and gesture. Impressions thus produced are an eloquent form of communication; and if Gilderoy could not always catch the precise sense of the spoken word, he never failed to interpret the attitude, as it were, that framed them.

Thus Dudley, using the form of intercourse his friend could not possibly misunderstand, offered his remark, without even turning round. His eyes glanced sideways.

"I am tired of this dowdy room," he announced.

Though he undoubtedly understood, the cat made no immediate rejoinder. Unlike humans, who cannot support a moment's silence in conversation and would rather all talk simultaneously than endure a pause, these animals appreciated intervals and practised them. Long pauses would separate question and answer; a statement might wait half an hour before the comment it elicited. And several minutes now passed in unbroken silence, yet without a sign of such embarrassment as humans know. Dudley's attitude was: "What I have said I have said." The cat, still sitting close to the cage, fell to washing himself again. He purred. A hind leg pointed like a ramrod at the ceiling. Then, presently, he interrupted his washing and looked up with a sudden jerk. The patched eye appeared to be

gazing through the window, but actually was fixed on his friend's back. His wireless whiskers twitched:

"Let's go," he replied. He kept one paw hanging emphatically in the air.

Like many important events in life, the adventures of Dudley and Gilderoy had this simple and spontaneous origin. There was no fuss, no elaborate preparation. Sniffing the air, the cat began to knead the tablecloth with all four feet. The bird waddled slowly back to the centre of his perch and thence laboriously stepped down to the floor of the cage. His beak, with its free-moving upper mandible, clutched the bars. The stillness of the house was now broken by distant sounds of thumping on the floor upstairs. A door banged heavily. The servants, perhaps, were getting up. It was time to act. Gilderoy opened the latch of the cage skilfully with one velvet paw. The door stood wide. They waited, staring at it. Dudley cocked an eye.

Gilderoy jumped down upon the carpet.

The parrot's moment of hesitation passed. He stalked clumsily sideways through the open door, and a few seconds later, using beak and claws, he descended the table leg and reached the carpet beside his friend. The creatures stood gazing at one another in silence. It was an important, even dramatic moment. Who was to lead the way? Whoever went first would, of course, be first to meet the dangers.

"You look best from behind," observed Gilderoy admiringly. "Your back view, I consider, is lovely."

Dudley preened himself.

Moving forward very slowly, he turned towards the Nursery door, leading the way with complete self-confidence.

The servants, who had thumped the floor and banged a door, having evidently thought better of it and gone back to bed, the biped and quadruped left the Day Nursery and walked along the passage to the top of the staircase without the smallest difficulty or interruption. Where they meant to go was not yet clear. The first move, at any rate, was to get out of the house.

Side by side, they descended the broad stairs, crossed the great empty hall, still dark and smelling unpleasantly of stale tobacco, and went quietly along the corridor that led towards the pantry and the servant's quarters.

Here they paused a moment, looking quietly into each other's eyes. Their next step was important. The pace of a party is the pace of its slowest member, and Dudley being a slow mover, they had taken ten minutes to reach this point. Though Gilderoy could have covered the ground in a few seconds, he had regulated his speed tactfully, keeping behind his waddling friend. Time was passing. Another thump and bang in the distance warned them that a servant had now decided, after all, to get up. There was a sound of sulky footsteps on the kitchen stairs. The moment for decisive action had arrived. For some time, therefore, the pair stood motionless, staring into each other's eyes.

"Let's get along," signified Gilderoy at length, yet making no move himself. He turned his eyes in the direction of a narrow skylight overhead.

Dudley, of course, had noticed it long ago. He also noticed the admiration still in the cat's expression. He would continue to lead. Using a chair, a hanging cord, a convenient shelf with precious china on it, and an iron bar, he fluttered up awkwardly, scrambled through the skylight, crossed some slates, descended an ivy-clad wall, and proceeded to march proudly, if clumsily, down the gravel drive in the direction of the lodge gates. The warm sunshine pleased him. It was good to be out. He moved at his very best pace.

"You waddle," remarked Gilderoy, his tail in the air like a ramrod. He made himself very big and protective. "I'm behind you, remember."

"My wings", replied Dudley some twenty yards later, "are clipped and I possess two feet!" He stalked on. "I only need—two," he added presently. There was a touch of grandeur in his attitude. After another twenty yards he disposed of this idea of protection too. "I see out of the back of my head," he reminded the cat. But he did not say it sharply. *Noblesse*, he remembered, always obliged. To put the other in his place, and pay himself a neat compliment at the same time, was quite sufficient. "And it's a nice warm morning," he concluded, saying the words aloud in his soft gabbling little voice.

He used, that is, the method these two friends adopted to avoid unpleasantness. At the first sign of a disturbance it was their habit to change the subject. A squabble between them was thus invariably nipped in the bud. They never quarrelled. The cat, his eye on a thrush a hundred yards ahead, agreed about the nice, warm morn-

ing, and stalked along stiffly with a restraint that was evidently a self-imposed effort. He would have liked to dart and rush. The next moment, indeed, he did so. Springing furiously at a pine tree, he suddenly flew ten feet up the trunk, claws spread, tail whirling, teeth bared, and looking fiercely over his back with flattened ears as though the dogs were at his heels. For two minutes he clung to the tree in this spread-eagled fashion, then dropped to the ground again as though nothing had happened, and continued his stiff slow walk beside his friend. Neither thrush nor parrot had shown a sign of being disturbed by this impressive performance. Gilderoy's active body needed the relief of a romp, no more than that.

"Ah!" said Dudley, when his friend caught him up again. He had used the interval to advance.

"We shall get there some time, even at this pace," said Gilderoy.

"Where?" enquired his companion.

"Where we're going to," came the rather tart reply. And, having now reached the lodge gates, they again paused and gazed into each other's eyes. The white country lane stretched in both directions as usual. At this early hour it was still deserted. Dudley, standing at right angles to it, examined it, owing to the position of his eyes, in both directions simultaneously. His companion, wholly indifferent, fell to washing an inaccessible region of his back. The windows of the Lodge were shut tight. No one was astir. And the bird shrank back a trifle towards the covering protection of the hedge where the wild roses

shone. There came over him the fact that he had escaped from his safe, comfortable home. He realized it, realized that he was no longer in captivity. There were no bars about him, no little dish of seed or tin of water, the swinging bit of soft wood his beak plucked to pieces and played with was missing, so was the clean coarse gritty sand his health demanded. There was no perch along which he could retire. He took another step backwards towards the comfort of the hedge. Gilderoy, for the moment, had unaccountably disappeared. The ancient bird felt suddenly lonely. A sense of insecurity stole over him.

Gilderoy, of course, would come back in a moment, he knew; he was merely scampering after a bird or mouse, but in the meantime the sense of insecurity was undeniable. Yet this, apparently, was all he felt. He experienced no regret, no compunction, his unceremonious exit from home caused him no pang. His world, the cat's world too, did not include regret; escape was natural to it. He thought of Molly a moment—he could go back to her when he wished; he thought of others, of Colonel Sir Arthur, for instance, of the Governess—he need never see *them* again. The one called him a “damned squawker”, the other was always saying “*Tais-toi, tais-toi, donc!*” Beyond these cursory reflections, however, his mind did not trouble with the past. Like all animals, he concentrated on the present, and the present just now not being all it might be, he cast about for something to alleviate a certain strain he felt. Spontaneously, he chose a whistle—the only tune he knew. The opening bars of *Lead Kindly Light* ran down the hedge and past the shining roses. It was a very

low soft whistle, hardly audible a yard beyond his beak.

In the middle of which Gilderoy, with a scattering leap, was beside him again, appearing from nowhere, and licking his chops as though he had never been away.

"Come on, you!" said the ginger cat impatiently. The bird noticed at once that his bolshevik face wore a slightly different expression. The cheeks bulged a trifle more. There was something inside him that was not there when he disappeared a moment before.

"Ready," returned the parrot, relieved to have him back, while thinking at the same time what a dreadful thing he was to look at. He began to move slowly away from the hedge behind him, but the rough ground was not easy for his little feet and the claws kept catching. His advance was circular rather, remembering that Gilderoy watched him.

"Where to?" he enquired casually, his head wrenched sideways at an extraordinary angle.

"London for *me*," replied Gilderoy with decision.

His friend took the Vicar's voice. "Quaite," he agreed, and marched on ahead in the thick white dust of the deserted lane. He was Leader still. He moved at a proud pace that rather endangered his balance, but could not affect his courage.

Gilderoy watched him. "D'you know where you're going?" he flashed with his whiskers, not stirring an inch himself.

"Er—not exactly," the bird replied, indifferently. He did not stop. "London anyhow," he added.

"Wrong direction, then," Gilderoy informed him

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

bluntly, as he stood there sniffing the air with little twitching jerks.

Dudley turned in a slow circle till he faced the other way. "For where?" he asked again gently.

"Train," said the cat, watching him with steady eyes. "You walk like nothing on earth," he commented, as his friend, turning another half-circle, drew alongside with his odd waddling gait.

"Yes, train," agreed the bird. He made a gesture that signified he was of the air and walking was a concession merely. And the pair stood motionless in the sunshine, as though nothing in the world mattered but being exactly where they were, and as though no adventure had begun at all.

Each creature, none the less, was active mentally. Their minds were extremely busy. Since they stopped all outward signs of communication, however, each kept his reflections to himself. It was a moment of privacy.

"It's going to be difficult, rather," the red cat was thinking, "this trip of ours. He's such a slow mover. He's fussy too, and his shape is a bit conspicuous." He purred gently, aware that his own appearance was perfection. His heart warmed towards his pal at the same time. "And his sex," thought ran on, "I'd like to know that!" A protective sense, never experienced towards humans, stirred strongly in him. He put all his very best into his friendship with the parrot. His patched eye glanced towards him admiringly. "Has useful ears, anyhow," he concluded. "Male or female isn't so important perhaps—in a bird." He gave a tiny sneeze,

DUDLEY & GILDEROY

Dudley, too, for his part was thinking deeply, and his thoughts were concerned, chiefly, with the appearance of this common cat, his companion in adventure. Whilst himself an aristocrat in every meaning of the word, he was not a snob, thank goodness. There was something in cats that he really respected and admired, something mysterious and queer and strange, but this particular cat. . . . He searched for terms that should be accurate yet fair, and did not find them. Something let out of a bag hardly met the case. Comparing Gilderoy's shabby looks with his own immaculate appearance, he deplored both his manners and his coat. At the same time he admired what he honestly could—speed, silence, sight. "Hideous," he concluded, "perhaps sometimes dangerous, but I love him."

Each, having thus finished his own private reflections, respectively, turned round and began to communicate openly with the other.

There was an immense satisfaction, evidently, that they had left the Day Nursery, for both had grievances, it seemed. Dudley was sick to death of being called "Pretty Polly" in an affected voice, of being assured a hundred times a day by all sorts of people that he wanted a cracker, a thing he never did want. Gilderoy, for his part, was weary of being lifted up in sections with all his feet hanging in empty space. And both were tired of hearing the children talk about an owl and a pussycat who went to sea in a pea-green boat. Tired to death they were of this nonsense. It was time, they felt, that mention was made of a parrot and a cat. For parrots and cats were notoriously enemies, whereas this pair was friendly. But no one spoke

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

of it. And to be taken for granted like this month after month was more than they could have put up with a moment longer.

The pair of rascals, thus, had a satisfaction in escaping, and they now communicated this happy mood to one another. They did so, looking about them over the sunny green fields starred with buttercups and daisies.

Now, communication between them, be it explained once for all, was so rapid, comprehensive, adequate, that it easily surpassed the capacity of ordinary language. Human beings, having gradually invented a series of not always musical sounds to convey what they know possess none, of course, to convey what they do *not* know. For the experiences of non-humans they have no words. Hence, purring and a parrot's gurglings, since they refer to another order of experience, remain, for humans, indecipherable. Into these and other gorgeous sounds, however, these creatures project their own wisdom, their inanities, their thoughts and feelings, with consummate ease. They understand one another. Gesture and attitude, the shaking of a feather, the twitching of tail or whiskers, the cock of head or angle of neck, the flick of an ear, even the movement of agile claws and toes—these largely took the place of clumsy words.

Thus, while Dudley and Gilderoy now gazed into one another's eyes, apparently uncommunicative, they were actually exchanging ideas of this high, but above all different, order. These ideas, none the less, must here be interpreted in terms humanity understands:

"Let's get on," remarked Gilderoy.

DUDLEY & GILDEROY

Dudley bowed his head in agreement. "Now, what do you know about trains, for instance?" he enquired sweetly.

"Enough", admitted the cat, "to take one."

"Which?" practical Dudley wanted to know.

"The first we see," was the reply. "They all reach London, I've heard, sooner or later." He glanced down the lane to the left.

The parrot, too, glanced down the lane, but to the right. He was not going to look foolish by taking the wrong direction a second time.

"Then please carry me," he signified. "The dust bothers my toes rather."

"Hop on!" agreed the other, lowering his scrawny back to an easy position. "And don't scratch or tickle."

Dudley, without further ado, fluttered on to the red back, raising a cloud of dust as he did so, and the pair then raced down the long hill towards the station. The cat went at a good speed, though out of consideration for his friend's disabilities, hardly at his top speed, and the bird held on and kept his balance without undue loss of dignity. The wind blew out his tail feathers grandly.

"It's a pity you can't see me," proclaimed the tail feathers. "I look well behind, in front, and sideways, too!"

Instead of answering, however, Gilderoy increased his speed, till at last the parrot felt obliged to comment audibly on this increase.

He screamed.

The cat at once erected his tail into its best ramrod position, so that it stood upright like a pole, and Dudley

wriggled awkwardly backwards till he clasped it with his beak and one claw.

"You're pricking!" spat Gilderoy, and stopped so abruptly that his passenger lost something of his dignity, though not quite all of his amazing balance.

"And what's this mean?" he asked, looking down his beak sideways but still clinging to the ramrod tail in case of a start as sudden as the stop.

"I've something to say to you," signalled the cat, not a bit out of breath, "and it is this!"

Dudley cocked his head to listen.

"If anyone chases us," the quadruped went on, "we go in different directions, remember." He lifted one paw and shook it with extreme rapidity in the air. "One of us", he added, "may then escape."

There was no need for a bird of Dudley's acumen to ponder this, and it vexed him a little when his intelligence was underrated. His contemptuous stare conveyed his feeling plainly:

"You're as obvious as a dog. Get along now to the train."

The stare was withering. With less admirable beings a sharp reply must have precipitated a quarrel; but there was no sharp reply. The cat realized, for one thing, perhaps, that his back lay open to that iron beak.

"I see plenty of young birds about," he mentioned instead, changing the conversation and peeping towards the hedge.

And having thus dropped a suggestive yet delicate hint near home and at the same time averted an unpleasantness

DUDLEY & GILDEROY

that threatened, he raced away again at such a speed that five minutes later they reached the little station where a train, they saw, was standing at the platform.

(There is not space, unfortunately, to reproduce here the extraordinary adventures of Dudley and Gilderoy in London. They fill a whole book, and prove conclusively the superiority of a mixture of feathered dignity and feline intuition over the forces of mere human nature.)

BY
W. R. CALVERT



GREY FOX GOES BACK

Grey Fox barked twice on Hartbarrow. The fell lay stark and white beneath the winter sky wherein a waxing moon raced in and out the scudding clouds, and star points pricked the velvet depths with gleaming arrogance. The shadows of the crags were etched, hard, swart and ponderable on the virgin snow each time the moon sailed in the fathomless purple of the deeper heavens; but the breast of the mountain was ever chequered with fleeting, inconstant shapes as the clouds travelled swiftly overhead.

Again the sharp, staccato bark cut clear across the silence. Faintly, as from a great distance, there came an answering call, a yelping squeal, mournful and most eerie; and Grey Fox pricked his black-tipped ears as, with lifted paw and pointed muzzle, he stood silhouetted against the light. He was about to reply before bounding off to seek the vixen whose cry had thus come to him three nights in succession yet who, herself, had evaded him with cunning persistency that kept him trailing till the laggard dawn sent him, weary and hungry, to his lair; but in that mo-

GREY FOX GOES BACK

ment another bark rang out, loud, clear, challenging, close at hand. In a flash he whirled and sniffed the wind. Came a growl, a hiss, a snarl. A cloud veiled the moon and darkness enveloped the mountain-top. With its passing the misted beams poured down again upon the glittering jewels of the snow: but the fox was gone.

It was a trick as old as the hills, a wile beloved of the Creatures of the Night; the usufruction of the gloom, the magic disappearance in the moment of obscuration. A dim form drifted like a leaf within the dimness of the racing shadow. It was Grey Fox. Swiftly he reached the drift-piled wall that dropped, black and sinuous, beside a tinkling stream to the distant valley; and in that moment a darker form sprang out to meet him, scattering the snow in all directions.

After the first tumbling, snarling flurry, the moonlight showed a big red fox, his brush waving, his fangs bared, facing the younger grey. For a while they watched each other, hissing and growling, but immobile save for the ominous grace of the waving brush. Then the red one lifted his head and sent forth, loud and sharp and very bold, the double bark of the courting fox. The vixen's answer came at once, much nearer than before, much more eerie and mournful, and most exasperating.

Grey Fox opened his jaws to reply, but his bark changed to a growl as the other rushed upon him: and the battle surged in earnest. The weight of the older animal bore down the grey in that first unguarded moment, but he rolled swiftly upon himself and carried the aggressor with him, all the while tearing the fur from belly and back as

he sought to sink his fangs in the sinewy throat. Fast and furious they bit and clawed. A shrewd, slashing rip opened the flank of the younger as they sprang apart and drew from him a squeal of mingled pain and anger. He made a rush; the other feinted and turned upon him, and again a raking blow seared him like white-hot iron, so that he snarled and sprang aside. Red, following up his advantage, rushed in. Grey was not there. Red whirled about, saw his adversary with lolling tongue and streaming flank, and rushed anew. Grey met him with craft and cunning in mid-air, rising to his falling body, and thus able to secure the lower, inner grip on the unguarded throat, the while his claws sought belly, flank and withers.

For the second time the weight of his bigger antagonist bore him down, but his fangs were gripped on the coarse, white hairs where chest and throat are one; and though sharp nails tore at his back and shoulders, he worried home the grip, slowly yet surely carrying it a little higher, a little deeper, a little nearer that vital spot he sought instinctively. All about the snow was trampled, scattered and stained with blood. A panting snarl, a muffled groan, the sound of tumbling bodies profaned the silence—that white silence of the mountains in winter's grip which is as clear and unbroken, as ineffably remote as the first great silence of the upper air.

Suddenly, from out the blackness flung by a dense and massive cloud, there rang a cry as from some tormented soul. The blackness passed with the long-drawn quavering note. With the coming of the light the cry shrilled forth again. Boldly standing on the wall, her

GREY FOX GOES BACK

amber eyes gleaming in the moonshine, the vixen looked down upon the reeling combatants. Her presence distracted Grey Fox. He started at the sound of her voice and glanced aside, for he was young, ardent, inexperienced, and he had long been seeking her for his mate. But his rival growled, a low, muffled growl because of the fangs at his throat, and used teeth and nails with unabated fury.

The fight had been fierce before: it was now ferocious, deadly, brutal in its violence. Grey Fox became a gory horror, his rival a blood-stained nightmare. The bloody slaverings from their jaws dripped to the reddened slush in which they rolled and staggered, fell down, stumbled up and were knocked down again. Their breath wheezed through wide-distended nostrils and smoked in the frosted air with the steam that rose from their heaving bodies. And from above the wall the gleaming eyes of the vixen burned like twin stars—steady, immovable, baleful in their intensity.

The end came swiftly. Grey Fox slipped and went down, and his adversary fell heavily upon him. Nigh winded, he strove to shake off the crushing weight that threatened suffocation; yet doggedly he refused to relax his grip on the throat and so obtain the air he needed. He tried to roll: the blood he had lost, and was still losing, made him weak, so that he could not move. A blackness, shot with flashing stabs of red, descended upon him, and he knew the end was near. And then, shrill and loud, the vixen screamed. Grey Fox heard. Savagely, recklessly, uncaringly, he shifted his grip and drove it home. A red,

warm flood gushed over him. The enemy quivered and was still.

Feebly, very feebly, Grey Fox struggled to his feet. He tottered and swayed, but turned to where the vixen stood silhouetted in all the graceful beauty of her being. Twice he barked, a quavering, uncertain bark. From the wall the vixen answered, then sprang down and licked his gory muzzle.

Together they loped slowly down the fell.

Dawn was breaking when Grey Fox led his hard-won mate to a narrow ledge on the rock-seamed face of Hartbarrow. The light comes slowly to the winter solitudes of the high mountains of the English Lakeland, yet the hours of gloom had been none too long for the victor in the fight. Had he been alone he would have crept away to lick his wounds and rest his aching limbs; but with the vixen by his side, pride and passion filled him with a new, fictitious strength, and eased his torment in a strange forgetfulness. He was hungry, too: ravenously. For three days and nights he had eaten little save the remnants of a rabbit buried in the snow on his last foray before the coming of the vixen, and a weasel surprised and pounced upon when rounding a corner of the ledge on which he had his lair.

So he and his mate loped down to the lowlands together, tongues lolling, eyes gleaming; and every now and again he nipped her flank in playfulness, whereupon she snarled and showed her teeth, but kept her place beside him. They made a handsome pair as they trotted through the dream-like beauty of the night.

Grey Fox was a descendant of the old breed that in-

GREY FOX GOES BACK

habited the fells unchallenged until there came the incursion of new blood from the south. Long in the leg, long and lean of body, with grizzle-grey jacket, a "throw-back" true to type, he differed from the smaller vixen with her dark coat of yellowish-red and "ring-streaked" brush. Like his ancestors, he preferred to lie up high, far removed from the haunts of Man, and to travel a wide beat; she favoured the lower slopes, where the deep ghylls and the crags dropped down to the rock-strewn fields and food was more plentiful and easier to obtain.

The moon had gone and only the stars' unsteady lamps shone dim upon the plains of night when the foxes entered the farmyard by the lake. A watchful cur, taken indoors because of the bitter weather, gave the alarm; but the robbers were off with their booty, a duck and a drake from a pen believed to be secure, when a window was flung up and a gunshot tore the silence—and nothing more. With pointed ears against his flat head, Grey Fox sped swiftly over the frozen ground. He made for his lair, instinctively and unthinkingly; and his mate followed. It was a long climb, and the leader ached from muzzle to brush by the time he reached the old, familiar trail from the tumbling stream to the bold, black bastion on the face of the crag.

A harsh croak greeted them as each moved gingerly, with mincing steps and upraised brush, down a steep and slippery slope. At the bottom the vixen stopped and snarled as the raven launched itself into the mist-filled void and disappeared; then followed Grey Fox through a narrow opening between two chock-stones—so narrow that

W. R. CALVERT

it seemed a cat could not possibly pass—and stood upon a snug, well-sheltered ledge that clung to the precipitous face of the mountain. Daintily she padded it, and found it to her liking. Already a glow was spreading from the opening gates of dawn and touched, indefinite, the up-flung peaks. Gradually, insensibly, the twilight filled with pink and purple luminosity. Crag after crag stepped forth from the curtain of the night, and when the vixen felt the first warm rays she sighed contentedly and curled herself upon the bed of heather which Grey Fox had prepared against her coming. Here, with the sunlight full upon them, with all the dale spread out beneath their gaze, safe and secure and sheltered from the wind, the foxes slept away the daylight hours.

Each dusk the pair stole out to hunt the lowlands, for food was scarce on the crest of Hartbarrow. Now and again they stalked a lonely curlew there, or coursed a mountain hare that sped before them, swift and low, across the glittering slope; but rabbits formed their staple food, with occasional pheasants from the larch plantations.

It was after a foray to a distant, mallard-haunted tarn on the far side of the valley that the questing nose of a fox-hound struck their scent and led the pack with ringing cries to the stream that grooved the flank of the fell. The foxes in their hidden lair watched the hunt trail up towards them. Grey Fox waited, careless and content, confident that no hound could reach them in their hidden fastness: but the vixen was uneasy. She paced the ledge with restless pads and whined fretfully when the hounds disappeared from sight within the ghyll, so that only the

GREY FOX GOES BACK

clamour of their tongues betrayed their swift advance. At last she could bear it no longer. With never a backward glance at her mate, she squeezed herself between the chock-stones and slunk, silent and unseen, into the maze of hanging ribs that crimped the frowning crag. Like a cat she went, one foot after the other, balancing with her outflung brush upon precarious ways. Swiftly she sped and vanished round the buttress; and Grey Fox lay still and unblinking on the narrow, sun-warmed ledge.

The vixen had not been gone a quarter of an hour when the ululations of the hounds above his head told the waiting fox that they had checked on that steep slope beyond the narrow entrance. Yet he made no move: one might have thought he slept, save for the watchful gleaming of his eyes and the nervous twitching of his nostrils as he tested every breath of air. The hounds were alone—of that he was sure, for the taint of humans was not mingled with their scent. The huntsman and his fellows were, in fact, toiling up the slope, panting and sweating, cognisant of the check, ignorant of its cause. Had they been more agile, Grey Fox might have had to fight the terriers on that hidden ledge; but while yet they struggled over the frozen ground, Mischief, a young hound in her first season, quested far and wide and stumbled on the breast-high scent left by the vixen as she stole from crag to crag. At once the bitch gave tongue and sought to hunt the line. Alone she would have failed, but when the others took her cue, the trail was found. Then the huntsman saw his pack clamber among those awful rocks, and he cursed the vixen loud and long. He dared not shout; he could not

follow: only stand and watch and curse and pray that none might slip to sure and certain death in the dizzy depths below. One by one they vanished from his sight; faint and more faint their music rolled away: and on his ledge the grey fox snoozed.

The sun was still above the jagged, pine-topped crest of the western ramparts of the dale when he pricked his ears and stretched himself to listen. All was silent, save for the mewling of a buzzard that wheeled in wide and graceful spirals in the blue-grey sky. Yet the fox was not content. He sniffed the air for every wayward scent, and strained his ears to catch each fleeting sound. Up and down the ledge he went, the while the "whee-u, whee-u, whee-u" of the climbing bird rang shrill and clear through the frost-nipped air. At last he passed the narrow opening and sought the higher ground by devious ways. Belly-flat, he crawled across the heather to where a sodden patch betrayed the source of the stream, and there he stiffened and lay still, for in that moment there came to him the whisper of a hunting pack from out the dusking valleys far below.

With that he did a curious thing. Rising to his feet, he moved in the direction of the sound with that gliding action peculiar to his kind: a deceptive, easy movement that carried him swiftly across the fell till he came to where it sloped steeply to a wild and jagged amphitheatre of crags and pillars, buttresses and gigantic boulders. Here the looming shadows of the early winter twilight filled the vast arena; but on the upborne airs there came the faintest taint of fleeing fox, the stronger scent of running hounds:

GREY FOX GOES BACK

and Grey Fox knew his mate was weak and weary and failing fast.

For a while he crouched on the rim of the crest, a watcher of the dark. Scent and sound told him every move in the approaching chase. Clearer and clearer came the bell-like music of the hounds as they hunted the fading drag up the steep acclivity. The vixen was making for the tops by a short but cruel route where every foothold was precarious, hoping thus to win sanctuary on that hidden ledge she had left five hours before.

As she emerged into view, Grey Fox knew she could not do it. Her eyes were glazed, her brush bedraggled; her sides heaved and she rolled unsteadily each time she sprang from rock to ledge, from ledge to slippery slope. She ran a twofold race with death—a swift and tumbling death on the jagged rocks below; a snarling, worrying death from the fangs of the pack behind. Yet on she struggled, and Grey Fox whined in sympathy.

Came a check. The vixen reached a narrow shelf above a deep and swirling pool into which dropped sheer the rushing stream; and there she stood, too dazed to find a way of escape, too weak to dare the leap to take her whence she came. She whined and cried between her gasping breaths, and Grey Fox whined again. The baying of the hounds was very loud, and as he looked the dog fox saw the leader of the pack struggle into sight. He voiced a warning to his mate; she cowered amid the hanging drapery of the ledge. Then, with stealthy tread and out-flung brush, Grey Fox ran swiftly down the slope and crossed the running water. He struck the trail some little

distance from the pool and padded slowly forward. Up and up he climbed, veering away from the ghyll, but taking all the cover he could find, and at last reached the skyline. There he stood, bold and sharply outlined in the slanting, rosy rays; and as the hounds toiled on, they broke from scent to view. Clamorous they gave tongue and raced to top the crest.

Grey Fox ran swiftly, straight for home. Fresh and strong, he easily led the footsore hounds, and when he bounded lightly to the entrance of his lair, his pursuers were far behind and failed to see where he had gone. The huntsman found them there a full hour later, and in the glory of a climbing moon led them wearily down the fell to where the lighted windows in the dale flung promises of food and warmth and cheer.

The lair on the ledge was deserted. No longer did Grey Fox and his vixen roam the slopes of Hartbarrow when moon-drenched mists drifted upward from the dale or the pinions of the night enfolded all the countryside in one black pall on which the stars gleamed bright as golden sequins. No more did croaking raven or wheeling buzzard watch them pass the narrow portals or snatch at tainted remnants in their larder: for the vixen would not trust the place after her cruel run before the hounds. The fell had been alien to her from the first, so that when Grey Fox found her, shortly before the dawn, crouching on the ledge beside the waterfall, and fed her with a rabbit he had brought, she showed most plainly that if he still desired her company he must go with her, back to the big "bor-ran" she knew across the valley, where heather grows rank

GREY FOX GOES BACK

and cock grouse call and treacherous scree-beds slope to still, black waters.

He went. She was his mate; his first.

Only a screech owl saw them cross the shingle where straggling lines of brown, dishevelled reeds fringed the lake-head shore. Day lightened from a slag-grey sky as they wormed their way into the mass of rock and shale that was to be their home. The "borran" ran far underground, and Grey Fox, accustomed to the open freedom of his lair, sniffed suspiciously as he followed the vixen through the tortuous ways. Yet he was satisfied to be with her, and in the ensuing days and nights found life more easy than before. Fur and feather lay almost at his door; so he and his mate fed well.

There was little to alarm them in their new retreat. Once, indeed, they crouched and cowered in the darkness. That was in the early days of March. For some time past there had been sundry furtive shufflings in the gullies as the loosening snow-packs slid from off the overhanging rocks, while tinkling percolations gave promise of a gurgling, brothy flood when the thaw began in earnest. And then one glowing afternoon, as the flaming bronze of the setting sun bathed high-flung peaks with burnished radiances, there came a roar, a rumble, a tearing, flaming crash, and all the fell about the "borran" shook and trembled. In one annihilating rush a jagged tongue of treacherous, ore-seamed rock slid downward from the mountain lip and dropped, precipitous—a red and ruthless bulk—upon the steeply sloping bed of scree below. The whole mass shivered and began to slide. It gathered

W. R. CALVERT

swift momentum, the while great boulders leapt and thudded, crashed and smashed in awful violence. A pillar of dust and smoke in which the fire flashed rose up to fill the air with sulphurous fumes; the valley throbbed with thunderous reverberations that echoed and were amplified from crag to crag; some startled peregrine falcons flew from hidden eyries in adjacent gullies and cried their fear in shrill and piercing tones; and the chill waters of the lake received the hurtling avalanche and seethed to waves that beat upon the farthest shore. . . .

Slowly the crashing died away in muffled rumblings that rose and fell, grew loud again and sank to muttered growls; the hovering dust-cloud paled and thinned; only the hawks screamed high above the tossing, foam-flecked lake.

It is given to few to see the awesome wonder of a rock-slide in the springtime thaws, but in a sheep-fold a mile away a boy watched wide-eyed from behind a dry-built wall. Michael Fletcher was on his way to seek the "bor-ran", for Dick the shepherd, who was his friend, had told him of a great grey fox that roamed the moor; and as he had never seen a grizzle-coat, save in a glass case in the shepherd's cottage, he hoped to find the lair. Like Grey Fox himself, Michael was long and lanky, long in the limb, long in the body. His dark eyes looked out from beneath darker protruding brows that gave him a heavy, lowering mien, swiftly lightened when his shy and fugitive smile broke across his face. His gait was somewhat loose—"gangling" the gamekeeper called it when he saw him crossing the moss-grown rides of woods and coverts to seek the hiding-places of birds and beasts.

GREY FOX GOES BACK

His hands were wonderful—long, sinewy, strong and very sensitive. He knew how to use them. Two cobbler's knives, old and very sharp, were his most treasured possessions, and that not solely because they had belonged to the father he had never known. With them and a block of wood he spent long hours, till from under his cunning fingers there grew models and presentments of many a wild creature; and the widow-woman, whose only child he was, shared with him the secret hope that one day he would go away and make a name for himself and a fortune for his mother in that great, unknown world where Art was recognized, and, so they believed, handsomely rewarded.

The rock-slide was a fortunate happening for Michael. Doubly so. Never before in the years he had lived in the dale had he seen such a sight; and it served to keep Grey Fox and the vixen in the deep of their lair long after they were accustomed to go forth to prowl the mountain side for grouse or plover, beetles, frogs and pipits ere descending to the little stone-walled pastures when the lustrous skirts of eventide trailed softly through the dale.

With the passing of the rolling reverberations, Michael left the sheep-fold and climbed the track to the moor. He had a shrewd idea that the Borran of the Echo was where he would find the fox he sought. It lay among a clutter of boulders at the foot of a breakneck crag that thrust itself from the upflung pinnacle of the highest mountain peak. He had christened it one summer day years before when, in the joyous ecstasy of glorious loneliness, he had yelled and yodelled from its rocks and heard his cries flung back

across the empurpled sea of heather and the peat-brown water of the tarn.

He went up swiftly, paying little heed to vain cock grouse that struttingly displayed their glossy dark brown plumage and handsome bright red combs before adoring hens. Here and there he saw stretches where the snow had been raked aside to lay bare the turf and heather: that was the keeper's work, so that the birds might scratch and feed. Corn stooks, also, stood like drunken sentinels across the moor, and now and again Michael watched old and greedy cocks drive off the younger birds and settle down to gorge themselves with grain.

Long slanting rays were still touching the crest of Hartbarrow on the other side of the valley when he came abreast the "borran". He had taken care to veer to leeward so that no breath of human taint should be wafted to the den, and now he crept forward, fearful lest in the swiftly fading light the fox should steal away unseen. He had not gone far when something stirred in the shadows cast by the overhanging rocks above the darker blot of the entrance. The boy lay still and watched.

A fox stood in the dusky gloom and stretched itself; he saw its teeth gleam white as it yawned. Next moment it was in the open, sniffing the breeze that barely stirred a wisp of bog grass between the watcher and the watched; and Michael was disappointed, for the thing he had come so far to see was but a common red fox of the mountains after all. Yet even so the grace and beauty of the creature held his gaze, so that he failed to see a second emerge from the darkness of the den. It was only when the first one

GREY FOX GOES BACK

turned and sprang aside that he became conscious of a big grey figure that rolled playfully before its mate.

Almost every evening Grey Fox thus indulged in foolish little antics with the vixen ere setting out on the more serious business of satisfying hunger; for they were both young, living in a land of plenty and unharassed by hounds or other enemies. To-night was no exception to the rule, though the rock-slide had made the vixen nervous, so that when her mate had rolled her over once or twice she snarled to show she had had enough, and slunk off in the direction of the tarn. Grey Fox scratched a pointed ear and then loped down the fell to where the stooks were just discernible. For a little while longer the boy lay hidden in the hope they would return, but with the passing of the light the air grew bitter and he had to go, determined to return from time to time and gain a fuller knowledge of this greyhound of the fells.

This he did in the days that followed, and had the satisfaction of seeing Grey Fox leave the "borran" towards the end of the month and make his lair among the heather lower down the slope. He may have gone of his own accord; it is much more likely the vixen drove him forth; for as Michael was watching one moonlight night he saw Grey Fox trot up to the "borran", a rabbit in his jaws, and drop it down just inside the entrance. The vixen picked it up and retreated into the darkness of the den, and though her mate stood and whined and peered inside, he did not dare enter. He waited awhile, but the vixen never showed her muzzle, so he turned and went down the fell, and the boy saw him no more that night.

Michael
had a rabbit

W . R . CALVERT

April came and went before the cubs first showed themselves; and that only for fleeting moments within the shadows. There were four of them, and in those early days Grey Fox worked hard, often roaming the mountain side in broad daylight to find food for himself and the vixen, on whom the demands of the youngsters were heavy and insistent. Fortunately field voles and rabbits abounded. It was at this time that the boy saw Grey Fox track and find the sealed-up holes in which the mother rabbits hide their litters. He had known that badgers scented out these cosy nests and dug down to devour the helpless young, but never before had he seen a fox do so. Yet one grey gloaming Grey Fox loomed suddenly before him as he was waiting near a spot where the neatly padded-down earth bespoke a rabbit's nest of young.

Just what the fox did at first Michael could not see; but soon he began to dig frantically from above, flinging the soil behind him and to one side, and then he thrust his pointed muzzle in the hole and dragged forth a tiny, naked creature. Again he did the same, and with his victims in his mouth he turned and hurried in the direction of the "borran". The boy did not move. As he anticipated, Grey Fox returned. Again he made off with a mouthful, and it was not till the third visit that he satisfied his own hunger and drifted away in the deepening shadows.

There came an afternoon when Dick the shepherd, busy in the lower pastures with the little Herdwick ewes and their black-faced lambs, greeted the boy by pointing to a tall retreating figure making for the hamlet at the foot of the Pass.

GREY FOX GOES BACK

"Keeper's been up on t' moor and says as foxes is worritin' all his birds."

The boy laughed.

"The cubs had grouse for supper the last time I was up," he said. "I saw them fighting over a wing at the mouth of the den."

"He says he'll have 'em—cubs and all," warned the old man.

"I hope not. There are plenty of birds, and they're nesting well."

"Aye. But Keeper's never satisfied; and foxes is always vermin."

The shepherd's words were with Michael as he trod the thrusting bracken fronds and heard the watchful cocks bidding him "go-back! go-back! go-back!" There also came to him, most clear and beautiful, most sweetly mournful, the whistle of a curlew that sailed unseen behind the shoulder of a neighbouring height; and though the day was full of charm as down the long savannahs of the sky there drifted rose-pink petals from the gold and silver censers of the clouds, yet in it all the boy sensed sadness.

He had not gone far when from the heather high above a grouse shot up with loud and startled cry. At once he dropped behind a rock. Something was on the prowl, and he suspected Grey Fox, foraging thus early. He was right. As he scanned the spot whence the bird had risen with noisy protestation, he saw a dim form slink in and out among the scattered tufts and boulders. It was Grey Fox cautiously picking his way down the slope, now stopping to taste the

air, now moving delicately, nose to ground, as he trailed some venturing vole. Once he pounced swiftly, and the watcher had no doubt a tasty morsel went to whet his appetite.

He came on slowly, most obviously suspicious, yet ever making for those grass-grown slopes where conies played and fed and had their burrows. The taint of Man was all about the moor, and though a dead cock grouse lay temptingly by a clump of fragrant sweet gale, he gave it a wide berth, for he feared a trap. He had not travelled far when something frightened him. The boy saw him wheel swiftly and vanish; it was as though the earth had opened and swallowed him, and the watcher was given not the slightest indication as to where he had gone, or why. A night and a day and yet another night were to come and go before an explanation was to hand in the person of an angry but determined man.

When the shepherd and the boy saw the keeper move up the dale in the direction of the Pass that first evening, they were wrong in thinking he was going to the hamlet. He was making a lengthy detour in order to reach a vantage point well above the Borran of the Echo. He had discovered the den of the foxes, though this was information he did not tender the shepherd. Neither did he say he had set traps here and there and baited them with subtle baits, such as a plump wood pigeon, a half-grown leveret, a cock grouse, a cat. In the last instance he had added to his subtlety by sprinkling a certain liquid about the spot; but so far all had failed, partly because of the clinging human scent which still remained, partly because Grey

GREY FOX GOES BACK

Fox and the vixen were most cunning. It was not until Michael found him making a causeway of turves into the tarn that the keeper gave some indication of the war he was waging.

For a while the boy stood and listened as the man anathematized the foxes for the toll they were taking of sitting birds and chicks. But he was much more interested in watching what was being done. As the track was built a space was left in the centre, and instinctively he knew a trap would be placed there. It was: a wicked-looking, strong-jawed steel affair that snapped viciously as the keeper tried it with a lump of peat dropped upon the plate. With infinite care it was arranged and covered, and then, at the far end of the tiny promontory, there was placed the carcase of a young and tender rabbit.

Any animal anxious to secure the bait could approach only by the causeway in the midst of which lay the hidden trap. And as though this were not enough, the keeper broke the law, for in the rabbit was sufficient strychnine to poison every fox in the valley—and every dog, too. But no one knew this save the keeper, most dour and secretive in all his ways.

With seeming unconcern, the boy asked where the foxes had their earth. The answer came most unexpected.

“ ’Twas in that borran over against t’ big crag yonder,” said the keeper, indicating the Borran of the Echo. “I lay up there till past daybreak two—three—nights gone, hoping to get t’ vixen or her mate. Never a sight did I see; and now they won’t go near t’ spot. When they took t’ cubs away beats me. But I’ll find the thieving devils!”

W. R. CALVERT

He did. Just how it came about the boy could never learn. He was not always on the mountain to taint the ground about the traps with that allusive scent of Man which ever serves to warn the Wild; neither could he trail the keeper on his constant rounds. It was Dick who told him that the cubs had gone. The keeper and his underlings had found the new retreat; where it was he did not know. What he did know was that that very day they had bolted the youngsters with terriers and taken them alive, to sell, most likely, to some Master of Foxhounds in the Shires.

"And the old ones?" asked the boy.

"For all I know they're still alive. I heard a shot afore I met Keeper with his bag. He said he'd missed. He hasn't seen Grey Fox."

Sad was the boy as he climbed the fell. Only the night before he had watched the furry youngsters play and fight and gambol in the moonlight. They had a grisly toy, a rabbit's skull from which the fur still hung in rags and tatters, and this they rolled and chased and growled over. And then they left the thing and raced each other to a distant tuft and back, or stopped to chase their tiny tails that scarcely merited the name of "brush" as yet. All this the boy remembered as he pressed upward, hurriedly, anxiously, though he knew full well there was little he could do.

It was that magic hour of the night's abeyance when light and dark are neither here nor there, though Earth is full of throbbing expectation. The slow recession of the sunset filled the vale with pearl and violet haze, and when at length the dusk grew deep and in the liquid sky the first

GREY FOX GOES BACK

pale stars appeared, a chill wind touched the boy and passed across the bracken. He shivered: and in that moment the crack of a well-choked barrel rent the air. The neighbouring crags took up the sound and flung it back and forth with varying intensity till the last weak echo died away—a sob, a sigh.

Michael ran forward. He had seen no flash and knew not whence the shot was fired; but as he went the acrid tang of powder reached his nostrils. He found the keeper by the tarn, the vixen in his hands.

“A bit of luck!” gloated the man. “I saw her on the skyline. She ran as far as this afore she dropped. I’ve half a mind——” He stopped. “No, I’ll get him another way.”

“Who?” asked the boy.

“Her mate. This is a vixen—a ring-streaked vixen,” he explained, showing the brush with its dark, circular markings. “If she hadn’t been I’d ha’ buried her up here and waited for t’ dog to come—as he would. But I promised t’ missus a ring-streaked fox for her birthday.”

From somewhere among the crags a fox howled piteously. The keeper stooped to recover his gun. The howling grew fainter in the distance.

Michael knew it was Grey Fox keening his mate as he returned to his former lair on the rocky face of Hartbarrow.

BY
PATRICK R. CHALMERS



SMOKER

Bullamore is a jolly place to shoot at; it doesn't go in for record bags and you needn't be a super-shot to be asked there. Six guns, "first time over", generally get three hundred pheasants or thereabouts; not much compared with some places, but the birds are worth shooting and the same men come to shoot them year after year.

The guns draw for numbers, but all the stands are good. In the lifetime, however, of Great-uncle Gregory (who'd been an institution at "the covers" since, the irreverent insisted, the days of the arquebus) numbering was invariably dispensed with at the last beat of the day, which, again invariably, was and is the long hanging wood called Four Winds, towards and into which the pheasants are manœuvred all morning and afternoon.

The wood stands darkly on a great tilt of grey down. The guns stand below, far back on the slope, and when the birds are flushed they come soaring and swinging up and out, to sail magnificently across the valley, the sunset behind them, back to their home woods, giving wild and

S M O K E R

delightfully difficult chances which it is no shame to miss and much better than rubies to accomplish.

The favourite rise is at that corner where the wood thins out above the steepest angle of the long slope, and it was fifty yards down hill from here that Uncle Gregory had been accustomed, by all the rights of use and friendship, to stand when Four Winds Wood was shot, a custom dating from the almost legendary occasion when he had stood there and picked up at the end of the beat twenty-eight tall pheasants for thirty-two cartridges.

Although Uncle Gregory always formally protested against this favouritism, he would, I am sure, have been both offended and very much hurt had he been put anywhere else, and so November after November saw him stand there, imposingly kenspeckle in the green jacket of a famous North-country shooting club, happy and eager as any boy; old Smoker, his steady old-style curly-coat retriever, in attendance, and the both of them with their eyes on the windy tree-tops over which the first cock pheasant of the drive would presently aspire, up, up, up, and over.

In or out of form, I believe Uncle Gregory enjoyed that stand more than any other of the season, and when, last June, Robin Bullamore put off a mayfly day on the Kennet in order, as he said, "to see the last of poor old Uncle G.", I tried to imagine the covers at Bullamore without the old gentleman, and especially to picture Four Winds, the beaters' sticks beginning, lacking that familiarly expectant figure at the far corner, natty, grey-bearded; and I simply couldn't.

When I arrived at Bullamore the other evening, old Smoker was lying before the fire in the hall, which didn't surprise me, as I'd heard that Robin had adopted him.

"Hullo, Smoker," said I, and the old dog lifted his head in abrupt scrutiny. Then he dropped his grey muzzle on his paws again with an air of finality and disappointment, thumped his tail once out of compliment to a guest and relapsed into his dreams.

"Poor old beggar," said Robin, "he seems by with it; he *really* ought to be put down, I suppose, but still—oh yes, he comes shooting, but he seems slack somehow, misses old Gregory, I expect—don't you, Smoker?" and the old dog thumped his tail once more in acknowledgment of his name.

I don't use two guns as a rule, but next morning Robin (it is an immemorable custom at Bullamore that Salter, the butler, loads for Robin at the home shoots) insisted on my having out the pair and taking his young soldier servant, at Bullamore for the first time, to load for me.

Guardsmen Blake, from Connemara, was a black-haired handsome young Celt with the dreamy grey eyes of a seer, and though he was a little too keenly appreciative of the actual shooting to make a perfect loader he was an eminently safe one. He had a brogue in which cream and honey were equally blent. We got on well.

Though the day had gone on the oiled wheels peculiar to Bullamore, it was later than usual when we got to Four Winds. A gale was rising, the brown leaves leaping aloft on it and flying like 'cock, and I heard Robin bid the keeper hurry or it would be getting dark.

S M O K E R

"You're 'five', aren't you?" Robin asked me, for to-night custom had passed with Uncle Gregory and numbering was to hold at Four Winds. "Oh, good! You've got old G.'s place then, and I'm next you. We should get some corkers. Hurry up; I believe the beaters have started."

I slipped along to the famous corner and settled myself.

"An' what's got Sheila, sir, that she will not be beside you?" asked Blake, in a voice like soft music. I looked and saw that my young Labrador was sitting a hundred yards off downhill, and her only reply to my peremptory summons was to crawl in, with deprecatory wriggles, some three yards and then lie down. Not a foot nearer would she come.

"You'd say she'd be frightened, sir," said Blake.

"Frightened be damned!" said I. "Well, anyway, Smoker isn't," I added, for a bare rod behind me sat the old dog. He seemed to have shaken the years off him like water, for was it not but a scarcely more than mid-aged Smoker that sat there, his eyes alertly on the wind-whipped wood, his ears cocked?

I heard Robin's wrathfully suppressed "Smoker, you old devil, come in!" I saw Smoker give him a half-head's turn of supreme indifference and remain regardant; and then, high over the beeches, came the first pheasant, the wind in the tail of him and his home woods half a mile off, and for the next ten minutes or so I'd other things to think of than the vagaries of gun-dogs. . . .

With a last scattered flush the rise was over, and turning, well pleased with myself, I saw that Smoker (neither

at my bidding nor, as I afterwards ascertained, at Robin's) was already at work. I could see him away downhill in the gathering gloom; he was hovering along the rusty bracken by the bridle-path. I saw him stop, pounce and pick up my first pheasant, and he returned up the slope with it at a hard gallop.

Five yards from me the old dog dropped his grey muzzle as if to put the bird into someone's hand; then he gave a sort of little lurch and rolled over.

At that moment Sheila flung herself upon me in an ecstasy of apology and flirtatious affection.

"'Twas the heart, sir, an' him galloping," said Guardsman Blake to me a minute later as we stood by the poor "here below" part of the old retriever; "the lad, but 'twas the quick end with him, annyway, an' him seeking his friend to give the phisant to an' all."

"Seeking Mr. Robin?" said I.

"Ah, no, then, sir," said Blake; "who but the old gentleman on the stick, him who would be watching the sport this last drive? But I will not have seen him since the shooting stopped; you'd say 'twas a great liking the dog had for him the way he sat in against him this whole time."

"It wouldn't," I said, half laughing, half in a prickle, "be an old gentleman with a green coat and a short grey beard, would it?"

"And why would it not, sir?" said Blake; "sure you'd see him yourself?"

But I hadn't for a year.

.

S M O K E R

“Skittles,” said Robin, when I mentioned the matter to him afterwards; and, as you’ll probably share his opinion, let’s leave it at that.

BY
MAJOR A. J. DAWSON



JEAN AND JACK

East, West, North or South, the folk who go around looking for the country where "there aren't no Ten Commandments" are wasting their time, for there is no such place. The Commandments (and the penalties) differ in different latitudes. That is all.

Judged by Southern standards, French-Canadian Jean might have been rated away down among the dangerous sort of pariahs. Even in the Northland, he might be spoken of as tough, as a bit of a hard case. But nobody there would have suggested that he was not white; that he had ever let a mate down or shown himself a quitter. True, he knew no more of introspection and conscience than of indigestion or his vermiform appendix; but in all the things that really matter where you get below zero temperatures he was supremely competent.

It is supposed that when men like Jean adventure into the softer airs of civilization, they are ripe fruit for the first confidence-trick man who crosses their trail. Jean gave few hostages to fortune in this direction, since he rarely strayed south of the Peace River. But when he did, the

tribe of four-flushers were never appreciably enriched by his visit. When he headed north again, there would always be money's worth in his pack; but not always money.

It happened once that he found himself almost as far down the coast as Vancouver, homeward bound for the white lands, and with no spending money left. It was at this critical juncture that he met Jack.

The meeting occurred outside the gate of the orchard flanking the house and gardens of the Moreton Bell family, and Captain Moreton Bell, as everyone in that section of B.C. knows, is a retired naval officer, whose heart and average expenditure are both larger than his pension.

Whatever their financial resources, the Moreton Bells were the right expansive sort of folk for British Columbia—the sort who tend to spread out and occupy vacant places. If their drawing-room was on the spare side in the matter of furniture and fal-lals, their lusty brood of children made it seem full and lively. So with the animal population of the pleasant, spacious place. Its dogs and ponies, ducks and geese, fowls and pigeons, cats and rabbits, pigs, cows and other more or less domesticated fauna, if not all exhibition specimens, formed a large and happy family, greatly given to increase and multiplication, and to casual ways of camping, squatting, picnicking, and nursing their young, in unexpected places, on the evident assumption that this particular home was maintained, inside and out, for their benefit.

Quadrupeds and bipeds alike, the Moreton Bell clan had distinguished antecedents. Thus in the case of Jack,

the representative who happened to meet French-Canadian Jean, nobody had been at the pains of drawing up his pedigree, but it is a fact that, in the course of some half-dozen generations it included (without mention of lesser lights) one champion Newfoundland, one champion St. Bernard, and one champion Irish Wolfhound. What might count for even more on that coast was the fact that it was known to include Jan, the famous Royal North West Mounted Police dog, and, therefore, the blood of that historic aristocrat, Finn, the Wolfhound. Black over the saddle, shading in parts to steely iron-grey, with big, rich, orange-tan markings—head and ears were tan—and a little V-opening of silver-white at the throat; Jack favoured the Illustrious R.N.W.M.P. hound, Jan,¹ in his breedy-looking long wedge of a face, bloodhound ears, peak and dewlap, hazel crimson-pitted eyes, and various other points. This, no doubt, gave some of its emphasis to Jean's low-breathed:

“By gar! Some dawg! By gar! What a team-leader!”

It was no small tribute, for, whilst never a man given to many words, Jean was at that time perhaps the most completely able all-round dog-master to be found between the Yukon and Hudson Bay. He had worked and slept and eaten and lived with no other company than that of dogs for months on end. He had trained, nursed, doctored and killed dogs. He had eaten dogs, and fought to avoid being eaten by dogs; and, one way and another, he had made the better part of his living by, with and through dogs, for many years.

¹ See the history, *Jan, Son of Finn*.

JEAN AND JACK

It is to be recorded to Jean's credit that, albeit at the end of his funds, and filled in ten seconds with a desire amounting to lust for possession of Jack, he made no attempt to entice the friendly young hound—Jack was not quite two years old then, and so hardly fully furnished as to his frame, and rich in innocent affability, as to mind and manners—to follow him; but, on the contrary, proceeded to open the orchard gate, and make his way slowly up to the house, where in due course he presented himself to Captain Moreton Bell, as a would-be purchaser of the big dog.

The captain laughed. He did not deal in dogs, it seemed; and, anyhow, Jack was not his property, but belonged to his younger son, Ned. No, the captain was afraid there was nothing doing at his place in the dog-selling line; but if Jean would care to have a look round, and see the other dogs—— And so a quite agreeable hour was spent, followed by tea, and soda-cakes, and maple syrup, and other such things; and, later, by Jean's departure in the dusk, after a most friendly sort of leave-taking; especially from the boys, with whom he had swopped dog stories; and from Jack.

Some four hours later, when the Moreton Bell family were all abed, and the countryside lay under a blanket of silence, the unsophisticated Jack was delighted to receive a visit from the man who had so intrigued him earlier in the evening, with different forms of ear-pulling and neck-scratching.

The innocent vanity of Jack was appealed to by the evident fact that Jean's visit really was to him, and the attention took on an even more pleasing aspect when

MAJOR A. J. DAWSON

there was added to it the unobtrusive gift of one or two fragments of aniseed-scented liver, which had been just sufficiently scorched before a fire to bring all its native succulence to the surface. Even without this perfumed attraction, it is likely enough Jack would have accepted as he now did Jean's invitation to a stroll. It was not until they were clear of the road gate that Jean gave a few moments to a judicious mixture of ear-scratching and collar-tightening, and, finally, clipped a stout moose-hide thong about the collar which he had already made extra secure. There was no compulsion, noise or argument, and to the pleasing accompaniment of further liver snacks, the massive young Jack passed out of the only world he had known till then, and bade farewell to what he had understood to be the normal life of his race.

Six months after Jean and Jack had turned their backs on salt water, below Chilkut, Jack had acquired perhaps twenty times more knowledge than a long lifetime would have brought him in his happy-go-lucky native place, and there was that between him and Jean in the shape of working understanding and attachment, that never had come between Jack and any Southland human, and that probably never would have come. Withal—you would have found it queer—Jack never touched Jean's hand with his tongue, and Jean's hand never touched Jack—after that first night in the old Southland home—for anything in the nature of stroke or caress. Singularly callous fellow, Jean? Why, no. In human life, schoolmasters don't caress pupils; working partners don't stroke one another; colonels don't fondle their N.C.O.'s.

JEAN AND JACK

There were knowledgable men on the steamer who, inspecting Jack with admiration, as dog, told Jean they would give him about one month of life as sled husky, and after that—washout. A beautiful dog, they said, as dog; but blood and bone of the South, and so incapable of withstanding the rigours of the North; the life of trace and trail.

“If he’s not et clean up by the first huskies he meets, he’ll lie right down in his tracks and die, inside of a month, Jean.”

Jean only smiled.

“Mebbe,” said he, reflectively. “We’ll see, bimeby.”

Jack’s whole magnificent hundred and twenty-five pounds would melt away like fat in a pan, his fellow passengers assured Jean. They said it with regret, admiring greatly the beauty of the yard-high dog, as they called him. (As a fact, though barely two years old, he stood just thirty-three and three-quarters inches at the shoulder then, and could comfortably rest his head on a table without stretching. Sound in wind and limb, he was, by Southland standards, in hard and perfect health; but, seen beside a working husky, and judged by trail standards, he was soft as a play-actor seems to a pugilist.)

Two things saved Jack from the washout on the trail which was predicted for him. Both came before he ever tightened a trace, and for both he was indebted to French-Canadian Jean’s superb competence as a dog-master, and complete lack of sentimentality. The first was the beating Jean gave him when he refused to board the north-bound steamer, and growled and snapped at Jean’s hand, by way

of reply to compulsion. Jean had been waiting for just such a thing, ever since they strolled out of the Moreton Bell orchard; and, immediately, without haste and with calculated severity, he acted upon it. Until that moment Jack never had guessed what a real beating meant. Now, being the highly intelligent person he was, he never would forget the beating, nor yet the least of its many implications, all which, in the soreness of after-reflection, he came to understand very well.

For several minutes, he was so far from understanding, as to suppose himself engaged in something in the nature of a fight. He had the illusion that he was fighting Jean, to avoid boarding that steamer; and, proud youngster that he was, he meant to win. (He hardly could have foreseen that the steamer would remove him utterly from the southern world of his upbringing, but some imperative urge within determined him to refuse boarding.) The deeply indurated mental make-up of French-Canadian Jean was not of the sort that lets a man down in emergency or allows him to be caught-out in a foreseen crisis inadequately armed or equipped. The stick Jean carried might have been called a club, and the moose-hide thong he had attached to Jack's collar was also attached, in deadly slip-noose form, to Jack's neck.

So it befell that within a few minutes Jack finally lost the illusion that he was, or ever could be, engaged in a fight with his master. And then, you would suppose, his real punishment (for mutiny) began. Not so.

Understanding of the fact that fighting his master was a thing entirely beyond his great powers having been

JEAN AND JACK

hammered into him, another illusion had to be for ever crushed out of his mind: the idea that he could escape from his master, or defeat that all-powerful authority's will. What with twisted thong, scientifically handled club, and Jean's methodical determination, this second stage was also reached without too cruel a delay. (Sentimentality would have postponed it excruciatingly; fatally, perhaps.) Jack lacked nothing in spirit, or in mental and physical hardihood. But he was less hard than metal-shod wood, carefully suppled moose-hide, and—Jean. Therefore, in another few minutes, he lost the possible-escape illusion. Half-choked, half-stunned, bruised and battered from hock to shoulder—blood and hair adhered to the club now—Jack did not grovel, but he clearly did surrender, to a power recognized as superior.

Then, and not till then, the execution of sentence began. Then, when the uninitiate would have supposed the whole business at an end, the French-Canadian drew fresh breath, tightened his grip, and began the calculated punishment of the big dog for the lethal offence of defiant disobedience with violence.

Do not make the mistake of supposing Jean to be animated by temper, or cruelty, or to have swung his bludgeon with lust. In fact, his arms ached, his state of mind was purely and coolly judicial, and he had no more taste for beating Jack than you would have for hammering an expensive new automobile with a crowbar. But, as he understood the position, every stroke administered now would save a hundred sore stripes later on; and, maybe, a great deal more than that. His supposition was accurate,

but the ordinary person, witnessing the last stages of that chastisement might well have doubted if any end could justify means so apparently pitiless. Jack was finally hauled up the gang-plank like a frozen side of beef. The time for reflection and learning began hours later, after Jean had carefully cleaned and doctored him; which he did with scrupulous care; greater care than he would have given to himself, and no more of sentiment than a skilled surgeon betrays in an operating theatre.

The second factor in the preservation of Jack from washout in the Northland came within a few minutes of his landing from the steamer, was all over in another few minutes, and, as memory and lesson, lasted so long as life endured in him. Two of them landed together: a sort of half-bred Pointer, with, perhaps, a dash of Great Dane in him, belonging to a chechahco from Seattle, and Jack. As Southland dogs, they had become friendly on the steamer, after Jack had healed of his punishment. It was unfortunate for the Pointer that his master was a tenderfoot. In the North, any kind of connection with incompetence surely entails suffering; frequently, as in this case, death.

There were huskies on the beach; quite a number. Generally hungry, always savage, they were tough and hard, agile and formidable, in a sense and to an extent unknown among dogs of the South. Two or three of them spat fire from their eyes and snarling jaws at Jack, but passed him by, noting his huge stature, solid mass, and dense coat. Two flashed in, one at either shoulder, upon the unfortunate Pointer, so that in one second his left ear was torn in half, and the right side of his neck laid open to the bone.

JEAN AND JACK

Before he knew what had happened, the two huskies were well clear of him, clashing their fangs like wolves, preparatory to darting in again. In another few moments, and before the Seattle man had begun to assert himself, Jack saw the Pointer go down for the last time, smothered; husky fangs and foam, claws and fur, submerging him, like a torrent of lava. Jack saw, and understood.

A moment later, and two of the biggest huskies advanced upon himself; not at a bound, but almost mincingly; emitting the while the most blood-curdling snarls Jack had ever heard. Like snakes, they spat their venom at him; like a porcupine's quills, their frosty hackles rose in ranks about their shoulders.

One swift glance Jack spared for his master, Jean. (There was a whole lot of recently acquired learning and understanding behind that lightening look. Jack knew already that *his* master was no tenderfoot.) Then he braced himself squarely, right shoulder set like a buttress, to meet the onslaught of the husky that was farthest from Jean.

The French-Canadian, with a low chuckle (provoked by appreciation of Jack's look in his direction) stepped in to receive the husky on his side; which he did very effectually—with his iron-shod staff. That husky retired, satisfied for the time. Not that there was any coward blood in him, but, as an experienced trail dog, he recognized a master, and himself was out for sport and for killing; not for being killed.

The other husky was in nowise disturbed, let alone bowled over, by contact with the solid wall of Jack's right shoulder, because he had not recklessly charged, but only

MAJOR A. J. DAWSON

flashed in, wolf-fashion, to cut and slash with his fangs. This he accomplished, neatly, in the same fraction of a second that saw him leap aside to prepare for another attack. Here, you might have said, was the moment for Jean. By stepping into the breach now he could protect and preserve his valuable property, and secure fairway for Jack. But the French-Canadian had other thoughts in mind. Turning his back alike upon the big husky and his own dog, he gave his club and his attention to the rest of the gang. He warned them off. They understood very well. Instead of rescuing his own dog, Jean, in fact, proceeded to keep the ring; to give Jack the Southerner a chance—yes; but to give the big husky his desired opening also. Assuredly there was nothing of the tenderfoot, nor of the sentimentalist, about Jean. He believed Jack could learn the essential lessons, and learn them quickly—given a fair chance. And he knew that if his belief were wrong, Jack must suffer much and die soon. His part was to ensure for Jack the sporting chance to learn.

In that first fight it was not possible for Jack to win, in the sense of wiping out his opponent. But it was possible for him to stand up to the big husky—as formidable a fighter as any in the locality—to take punishment without yielding or succumbing to it; and, in the never-to-be-forgotten process to learn priceless lessons. All this he did, to the satisfaction of his master. And then, when he was well blooded, and the husky had begun to conceive respect for his mass and for his endurance, and to wonder a little anxiously how he was going to make his way down to the actual life sources of this Beachy Head of a dog;

JEAN AND JACK

then, and not till then, Jean stepped in with his club, and the husky—at heart by no means sorry for the chance of withdrawal without loss of face—was forced to retire.

Never would Jack forget the lessons learned in that encounter. Still less, perhaps, would he ever forget the gruesome end of the Pointer dog. Thus, within half an hour of landing, he paid his footing, and was for all time armoured, so far as his kind could be, against the more instant and deadly perils inherent in the Northland life, even for the biggest and bravest of Southland dogs. Jack's sea-voyaging began with a terrific beating, and ended with a pretty severe bleeding, and the enforced view of a butchery. If kindly sentiment had intervened to spare him either experience, the steamer men's estimate of a month's survival would possibly have proved over-generous.

Their outlook warped by the froth and spume of city life, men talk of the monotony of the Arctic. It is in truth grim and stark enough; but for men who traverse the Northland trails every-day life is far too keen a business to admit of monotony. The dogs who are their partners and trail-mates assuredly know less of tedium than the most favourably placed members of their race in the congested lands of civilization.

*There's never a law of God or man
Runs North of Fifty-Three. . . .*

It was a seer who wrote it, but, if it could have been translated into dog-talk, how Jack would have laughed at it, after twelve months experience of trace and trail! If he could have spoken, he would have told you the southern

MAJOR A. J. DAWSON

world knew nothing of rigid discipline, or of law and order, and that no man or dog was truly law-abiding, *south* of Fifty-Three. Even the average trail husky is a perfect miracle of law-abidingness, of steadfast citizenship; and Jack was never an average trail dog, any more than Jean was an average trail-master. Eight months after he first felt a trace tighten against his shoulder, Jack was a team-leader. He never afterwards took any lesser post, however good his company. And, be it said, French-Canadian Jean was not a man who ran second-rate teams; while for sentimentalism or favouritism, he knew them not at all. Rations, punishment, or preferment, commendation or condemnation, so far as Jean dispensed them, all alike had to be earned.

Even among old-timer dog-masters, the vision of few was so penetrant as Jean's, as was shown by a passage between himself and the most famous of the sour-dough dog-mushers in Chilkut.

"Seems kin' o' qucer to me to see you a-playin' tender-foot tricks, Jean," said this veteran; pointing with his pipe-stem at Jack.

"Heem? Oh, Zhaque he's all right—fine dawg!" said Jean.

"Fine hell! This ain't no 'Frisco dawg-shop, Jean. Let me tell you pedigrees melt like fat'n a pan, on the trail. Champion sire an' dam, no doubt. How's a champion goin' to shape in a sixty-below blizzard, I ask you?"

Jean chewed his pipe reflectively.

"Champion an' pedigrees he's all right—very good t'ing—ef a dawg's got ze stuff in 'im. It's men makes 'em soft, not breedin'."

JEAN AND JACK

"Oh, hell! Breedin'! Give me hard-shell mongrel huskies, every time. What's the good o' breedin', in sof' snow—on short rations?"

"Why, tha's jus' where breed tells," said Jean. "Breedin' means feedin'; tha's why breedin's good t'ing. You t'ink champion he's no good, 'cause you see 'im 'longside some fool man. I look 'im—look the dawg 'imself. Ef'ee's good, me I'm glad 'e got champion blood. You know why? It takes many dawgs, many bitches, many pups, many years to make one champion; an' all ze time one t'ing—all the time. You know zat t'ing—huh? Good feedin'; grub-box all ze time full; good an' plenty grub, *all* ze time—Tha's breedin'; an' when trouble 'e come, ze bottom e' don' fall outer zat; not very queeck 'e don't."

It would be easy to write whole pages about most of the days in Jack's life during the three and a half years following his arrival at Chilkut; his learning, his hardening, his few (always fruitful) failures, and many triumphs, his most notable fights, how he paid for the great wisdom he won, and how he earned the reputation that presently labelled him the strongest, wisest team-leader on the trails. It had epic properties: that Northland life of the Southland dog, and some day, its record should be given to the world—some day. Meantime, there is the matter of what happened in '14, when Jean and Jack, and Jean's partner, Long Pete—six foot three in his moccasins and tough as moose-hide—all broke trail for the south.

Those who live among telephone wires, and listening in to the hum of stop-press news, would naturally assume that word of such a cataclysm as that of August 1914

MAJOR A. J. DAWSON

would travel pretty quickly in even the remotest parts. But once you get north-west of the Yukon, into such country as that in which the Porcupine River has its beginnings, there are many such assumptions that do not hold. The news that gripped the minds of princes and paupers elsewhere within a matter of hours, was full three months in reaching Jean and Long Pete; and then came so to say accidentally, by word of mouth, and in pretty queer shape. Europe had "gone bughouse", Germany was at England's throat—the strangle grip—France was afire, and all able-bodied Canada was trekking East to lend the Old Country a hand. It was the last great show-down, and every man who was a man was wanted. That was about the size of it, as the news reached French-Canadian Jean; and within a few hours of getting it, with less of discussion than many folk give to their choice of luncheon dishes, Jean and his partner had thrown aside the results of six months' arduous toil, along with the most promising gold proposition either had ever struck, and were heading south-east for B.C. and salt water.

"Reckon we've got to be in it, Pete." And:

"We sure have, Jean, ef we can anyhow make it on time."

That was the extent of summing up and verdict.

The trail from the Klondike to the beach is no sylvan way, but it is a deal easier than the long pilgrimage the partners had before them, from the Porcupine country to the Klondike; for the latter is a trackless way, and some of it is as empty of game as mid-Sahara. There was nothing in this, however, to daunt such men as Jean and Pete; and

JEAN AND JACK

their dogs were in good heart, after a spell of hunting and resting. They had made many trips approximately as arduous, albeit none with an objective more worthy or less mercenary; and, taking things by and large, Jean reckoned on forty miles a day going. But the gods thought otherwise.

In the afternoon of the first day, Jack, the famous team-leader, found himself on a moose trail. An hour later, that big bull moose bit the snow with a bullet in his brain from Jean's rifle. It was as near as might be a sitting shot, and:

"I reckon that bull must've made up his mind to suicide," opined Pete. "But he was mighty old for love troubles, so mebbe it was *fi-nance* ez played him up."

Jean nodded, after curtly instructing Jack to keep his team-mates in order; a command that hardly would be given to any but a marvellously accomplished team-leader—within a few yards of fresh moose blood; but a safe one where Jack was concerned, as his master well knew.

"Heem pretty sick," pronounced Jean, after overlooking the fallen moose.

"Still, there's flesh on his bones. If we camped here, we could stock right up on this meat, *and* give the dogs a gorge, an' then be saved breakin' our pack for another coupler days. That's what I'd call gettin' on with it, Jean. Be dark in another hour, anyhow."

Jean seemed hesitant, and repeated of the moose: "Heem pretty sick." But in the end the getting-on-with-it idea won, camp was made, the moose roughly dissected, and a big clean-up feast left for the dogs.

MAJOR A. J. DAWSON

For a man of his parts, Jean was a notably small eater, but he woke next morning with a disagreeably greasy taste in his throat, and a feeling of having over-eaten. Long Pete, always a steady and powerful trencherman, felt downright sick, and began the day with a big dose of soda. That Jack, the big leader, had trouble in parading his charges for harnessing-up was glaringly obvious; but the startling thing was that he himself, the faultless leader, and pitiless disciplinarian, went about his job in sottish fashion, heavy and loutish in movement, and slack in the enforcement of his own growlingly barked orders.

"Bellicies too plumb-full; they're gorged," said Pete. "An' I'm more'n a bit that way meself."

"But look at tha' Zhaque," growled Jean. "No feedin' don' make 'eem zat way. By gar! Me, I don' like zat. Come on, Pete. We get away outer zees place, queeck. I don't like it."

They got away, but progress was not exactly "queeck" that day; and at night the partners were given the queer experience of seeing their entire team turn languidly away from fresh-frozen moose-meat. Lacking both the appetite and the good humour that were normally his, Pete turned sullen when Jean proposed scrapping the prepared moose-meat stew, and breaking pack to get at other food.

"Hell! I'll waste no meat an' cookin' for any man's fancy," Pete vowed; and proceeded to eat more of the stew than he cared for, by way of showing independence. It was not like Jean to show laziness, but, whatever the reason, he neither touched the stew nor broke pack, and so went fasting to sleep.

JEAN AND JACK

In the morning, Fatty, a low-built, good-working dog, whose place in the team was next ahead of Snow, the wheeler (a big dog, and as near white as made no difference) was found dead, his body curiously twisted and contorted. A greedy feeder, and below the team's average in intelligence, Fatty had always been a good servant; but it was more than the loss of him that clouded Jean's face, and inspired the oaths that rumbled up from his throat.

"I don' like ziz; I don' like it," he muttered.

No word passed between the partners about the bull moose flesh, but as neither chose to pack its remains, they were left behind when, after more delays than usually occurred in half a dozen of Jean's starts, a move was made. Jean was at the gee-pole, and Long Pete in advance to break trail. But before many minutes had passed, a change was made, and Jean took his partner's place. Pete's long stride and great strength made him an ideal packer of trails, but it was clear the job was beyond him to-day. Even at the sled, he soon became more of a drag or brake, than a guide or driver, and, poor though the team's progress was, it was little that Pete's whip troubled them, for he was quite incapable of directing its twenty-foot thong.

Jack, the leader, was a very sick dog that day, and, but for the iron sense of discipline that had come to govern his trail life, it is doubtful if the others would have tightened a trace at all. As it was they lacked the tonic influence of his usual "word of command" barks, warning growls, and flashing, over-shoulder glances. It was as though he had measured his capacity, and, having found it allowed no margin for schooling, devoted all there was of it to the

job of simply keeping the traces taut. Even so, the distance made was below half what Jean had set himself to average; and when the evening halt came, all the dogs except Jack lay down in their harness, too indifferent to think of food. Jack eyed them, with a stare of sick disgust, occasionally half-baring his fangs, but without any sound of warning snarl. The direst threat he could accomplish was a sort of suggestion of:

“You wait till I’m myself again; that’s all!”

And then, suddenly, and before the partners had finished unharnessing, Nip and Tuck, the two huskies whose places had been immediately ahead of the deceased Fatty, started off at a mad gallop, almost as Southland dogs will, who, lacking other exercise, chase one another in a field. They galloped in a wide circle, with occasional whining barks. Then Nip overtook his mate and good friend, and tore savagely at Tuck’s neck; and Tuck wheeled swiftly, and in passing tore a strip from the ear of old Snow, who was still fast to the sled. Within another few seconds most of the team had felt the slavering fangs of either Nip or Tuck, and Jean was feverishly throwing lashings off the sled to get at his rifle. He had seen dog madness more than once or twice before, and knew the deadly perils of it well.

Within another minute, what had been as fine and hearty a ten-dog team as any in the Arctic, became a demoralized group of seven forlornly sick dogs, not one of which possessed energy enough to ask for his grub ration, or to dispose of it when it came. Long Pete, husky giant that he was, seemed in little better case, and for the

JEAN AND JACK

first time in all Jean's knowledge of him, refused either to touch food or to take any part in preparations for the night, asking only to be let alone to sleep if he could. As for Jean, his state was very much that of his team-leader; and perhaps that was why, before getting down to it for sleep, he addressed himself to the big dog.

"By gar, Zhaque, I don' like it, an' you kin say I said so. You could mush our load wiz onlee seex mates, from here to hell-an-'gone; but zoze seex 'ee's all been bit by Nip an' Tuck. I don' like zat, by gar, for we's got to make salt water zees time ef ze bottom falls out've ev'rying, an' don' you forget it, Zhaque."

Jack cocked his right ear, but with a look telling as much of nausea as understanding. There was a suggestion of "Aye, aye, sir" in the set of his long jaws, but mighty little snap in the whole of his big frame. Dawn found the team of seven reduced to five, old Snow and a husky called Patch being dead in their nests, all twisted and stiff as Fatty had been.

Long Pete had nothing to say to this, nor would he accept Jean's suggestion that they should lie off for the day. No, they would make tracks, he said, since they had a long stretch of barrens before them. In that case, Jean laid it down that Pete should ride on the sled. "Zhaque" would boss the reduced team all right, if he, Jean, broke trail, and Pete rode. The partners—normally so little given to discussion—argued the point at length, thereby wasting much precious daylight; and in the end they started with Pete leaning on the gee-pole, whip in hand, a dismal caricature of his familiar self.

MAJOR A. J. DAWSON

"You can go to hell, Jean," had been his concluding contribution to the argument; "an' that's all I can do f'yer; so forget it, an' mush on."

But there are forces more potent than argument; and a couple of hours later, Pete lost his hold on the sled, fell, and lay in his tracks; the others carrying on for half a mile and more before his absence was noted. Jean had no energy to spare for head-turning or taking in scenery.

When Jean won back to the sled again, half dragging, half carrying his big partner, another of the dogs was dead, and Nosey, the dog who had been put in Snow's place as wheeler, was tying himself in knots, and trying to eat his own tail, while bloody foam drooled from his jaws. There was no possibility of mistaking the deadly symptoms, and Jean, perforce, had to unleash his rifle again.

With a barely conscious mate, and a team reduced now to three, Jean made a short six miles, before getting down to the nursing of Pete, who had travelled, of course, on top of the sled pack; Jean having harnessed himself to the traces, well ahead of Jack, and pulled his best, while breaking trail.

Their only medicines were soda and the lees of a bottle of "Pain-killer"; and all the nursing that could be done was the provision of an extra-thick spruce-twigg bed, an extra-big fire, and the addition of Jean's skin-robe to Pete's own. The end, as the big man himself would have wished, was not long drawn-out, for he breathed his last a couple of hours before daylight, his upper teeth set firm in his lower lip, to keep back sound, and the glare of pain in his eyes. As he had lived, Pete died hard. As he had

JEAN AND JACK

been used to travel light, so was he buried light; for once the snow was passed, Jean could not dig far. But he piled rocks over his mate's last bed, and the barely articulate words he muttered, drawn from hazy memories of childhood in Quebec Province, were definitely intended to commend Long Pete to the authorities in another world. So, in the peculiar circumstances, they may possibly have served as well as a padre's.

One of Jack's remaining two team-mates proved worthy of his name—Tough—by surviving for three whole days and nights after his fellow had passed in his checks; and, more, by throwing such of his weight as was left into the traces, right on to the last hour of a six-day fast.

Then Jean and Jack were alone in the barrens, between the Blackstone and Forty Miles. But their cases were somewhat different; for, while the big dog was clearly on the mend, so far as the poisoning was concerned, the man, for all his determination and for all his wisdom as master of dogs and trails, grew steadily worse. The sickness seemed to develop more slowly in him than in the others, as though the resistance he offered was more stubborn. Or it might be because he had eaten less of the bull moose.

It was a strange sight that the two presented, had any been there in the barrens to see it. Half the load of the sled had been jettisoned. Jack was harnessed as wheeler; and, with a special breast-band of his own contrivance, and separate traces (because of the different elevations from which they pulled), his master was harnessed in the lead. The back-pull of the sled made trail-breaking slow and

difficult; but as Jack's sickness gradually mended, he threw himself with ever-increasing effect into the collar.

Nobody was there to admire or to learn; but if any student of animal psychology could have observed that epic progress, perhaps the thing that would have most impressed him would have been, not the man's indomitable determination (harrying his exhausted body into continued defiance of its deathly sickness) but the uncanny skill and judgment with which the dog's devotion to duty and to his master expressed itself. At the outset he made mistakes. Not one of them was ever repeated. His first efforts to ease Jean's task meant that, as the result of taking up the entire pulling load himself, he caused Jean's traces to fall slack and drag on the snow. Though busy in packing the trail, Jean soon saw what was happening, and flung an order over his shoulder for Jack to steady down. (He did not care to halt, for this or any other reason, since loss of momentum was a serious matter for this strange team.)

From that moment on Jack had an added task; one he perfectly understood, and most perfectly discharged. That he would pull the weight of the sled he was determined. From now on, he pulled it with such nicely gauged precision, over all the ups and downs of that raw trail, as to keep Jean's traces just stretched; no more, no less; so that they were rather a help than a hindrance, rather a support than a burden, to the trail-breaker. It might be less heroic than some of his other feats that have passed into Northland story now. But nothing could have had greater interest for the student of dog psychology than this piece of sustained diplomacy; maintained, mark

JEAN AND JACK

you, by a still sick dog, in the teeth of extremest difficulty. The wind across the barrens cut like a scythe; the air was full of powdered snow; Jack was pulling four or five times his fair load; and, as Jean weakened, his packing of the trail became less and less effective.

These things hardly lend themselves to exact appraisal, but Jean's fourth day in traces was doubtless marginally noted in the Book of Judgment. In similar case, it might be that a score of other men in the North might have started that morning, as Jean did, despite the ravening pangs that seemed to tear like lynx-claws at his vitals. Few indeed, if any other than himself in all that world of steel-fibred men, would have held to the trail, as he did, throughout the normal stint of hours, till dusk fell.

Jean fell, too, directly he halted. But, gnawing hard at his lower lip, he picked himself up after a while, loosed Jack from the sled, albeit without unharnessing, and dug out his ration from the pack. Then, with no attempt to feed himself, he gathered all his wraps about him, and, husky-like, curled down to try and sleep. Jack, his ration despatched, dug out a nest right alongside, and coiled down in such fashion as to give the full warmth of his big frame to Jean's back. That also was psychologically interesting; for one of the first lessons the trail-dog learns is that he must always secure for himself all the food, rest and warmth—foundation of life—within reach, never giving away or wasting a scrap of these. He buries himself tightly in the snow to sleep, so as to conserve for himself all his own warmth.

Jean contrived to hitch Jack to the sled next morning,

and then, before his own traces were fixed, stumbled, fell, and lay helpless. Jack pondered this development for quite a while, before finally setting his teeth in Jean's breast-band, and dragging him round towards the tail of the sled. There was no doubt whatever about it; he was inviting his master to get aboard. He even tried to give it articulation by grunting and nickering low in his throat, as he thrust the bight of the breast-band hard against the tail-board. Words, after all, would have been superfluous.

"By gar!" moaned understanding Jean. "By gar, Zhaque; what a dawg!"

There is no doubt this super-canine achievement stimulated the exhausted and pain-racked Jean to further effort. Three minutes later, from the place in which he then crouched on the pack, Jean let out a groan that was recognizable to Jack's eagerly cocked ears as the single word "Mush!" and this new stage in the pilgrimage began.

Now it is beyond dispute that these things happened at a distance of almost sixty miles north-west of Dawson City. The capacity for belief in some men exceeds that of others. Make what you will of it; but you cannot doubt the distance; and there is Jean's sworn statement that three full days and nights passed between his first riding on the sled, and the now historic arrival in the outskirts of Dawson. Half the time, Jean was unconscious. In no single hour of it could he attempt in any way to fend for himself. Jack could not, in any case did not, get at the rations; neither did he, even for one hour, leave his master to go hunting for food. By day he hauled the pack-and-man-laden sled, himself playing all the parts of trail-breaker,

JEAN AND JACK

team-leader, team, wheeler, and driver, with never a hint or a heave from man or dog to help him. He warmed his man by night, and hauled him by day; and he never broke a yard from the straightest possible trail for Dawson City. He accomplished all this, fasting, in a temperature never less than forty below; and, in the end, he yielded Jean over to those of his own kind, alive, at all events; conscious, and capable of coherent speech, though not of unaided movement.

In the first hour, there were tough sour-doughs who choked as they swore, over that arrival. They swore, no doubt, because they choked; and that, of course, was why they blew their noses so vehemently over Jack's refusal to leave his master, when Jean came to be carried into shelter. Many others, with less care for appearances, perhaps, did openly weep salt tears over second and fourth-hand records of the scene. Perhaps the craziest of the gifts forced upon Jack's attention when men first heard (from Jean's cracked lips) of his long fast, was a dish of asparagus not less expensive than champagne. But as there were also lashins of salmon and liver and good red beef, Jack had more than as much as was good for him, of real food.

Jean had nine days in bed, and was coaxed and bullied and tricked into taking eight more for recuperation, after leaving the bed. Jack was a house-dog all that time; and men who knew of him only that he had spent four years on the trails, marvelled somewhat at his house manners.

Among Jean's many visitors here was the old-timer who, years before, in Chilkut, had jeered at what he called Jack's fancy pedigree.

MAJOR A. J. DAWSON

"Tha's breedin'," Jean told this sour-dough now. "No husky ever whelped has hit the trail alone, three days on end, an' hiked a full load into Dawson City."

The journey down to salt water, and thence to Vancouver, was something of a triumphal progress, something of a pageant, for Jean and Jack. And the arrival at the Moreton Bell's place, that, too, was a memorable business. For, with his honours, as recorded in newspaper print, thick upon him—one much-favoured headline was: "The Dog who Walked by Himself"; others borrowed Jean's own phrase: "No husky ever whelped has hit the trail alone", etc.—Jack was restored to the home of his forbears, before Jean presented himself to the military authorities.

Years later, a little cross was planted over a grave in the Moreton Bell's orchard; and that cross, as near as may be, is a replica of another that stands in the near neighbourhood of Vimy Ridge, not far from where French-Canadian Jean fell. One marks the grave of a man, and a gallant soldier; the other, that of a dog, who outlived him by nearly seven years. And, in B.C., at all events, there are those who hold that, notwithstanding the six thousand miles between the two crosses, and the differences between man and dog, the partnership between Jean and Jack may well have been resumed by now.

BY
MAZO DE LA ROCHE



PETER—A ROCK

YOUNG Ffolkes did not want to call the puppy Peter. The name, he said, had been done to death. He would have liked either something quite unusual and distinctive or absolutely commonplace, such as Jack. He thought it rather hard that he was not allowed to name his own puppy.

On the other hand he was so grateful to the seventeen ladies who lived at Mrs. Dowling's, for tolerating a dog in their midst, that, if they had chosen, he would have consented to name him Cyril or even Homer.

Mrs. Dowling herself, handsome and accustomed to having her own way, said that Peter was a good name and just suited him. He was, in truth, rather a Peterish sort of puppy, playful, appealing, whimsical. He had just reached the long-legged stage and his tail was turning into a silky, wavy plume. There was a shallow sparkle in his hazel eyes. He had been sired by the champion Scotch collie, Glen Robert.

Young Ffolkes often wondered why he lived at Mrs. Dowling's. It was certainly an odd environment for a

lively chap of twenty-seven. It had begun by his going there with his mother for a year, after she had given up housekeeping. And, later, when she had died, it had seemed the natural thing for him to return to the midst of these middle-aged and elderly ladies who had known her.

Now he had lived there for five years. Some of his young lady friends began to wonder if he were not altogether too comfortable at Mrs. Dowling's and might not spend the rest of his days there.

He was indeed comfortable. He had a big sunny room on the top floor at the front, with a coal grate, two wicker arm-chairs and three stuffed ones, also an enormous shabby couch, which even the attentions of a half-grown puppy could not disorganize. The two rooms underneath were occupied by Miss Green, who was just hard enough of hearing not to be troubled by noises overhead.

Young Ffolkes had seen changes at Mrs. Dowling's. He had seen Miss Green's head turn from iron grey to snow white. He had seen Miss Hubbard change from a plump woman into a very fat woman. He had watched old Mrs. Slee grow prettier and prettier and old Mrs. Kane grow uglier and uglier. When people first saw Mrs. Slee's exquisite white hair, her delicate pink skin, her small, smiling mouth, they involuntarily exclaimed: "What a beautiful girl she must have been!" And when they beheld Mrs. Kane's sallow, pouchy cheeks, her hairy chin, her scant, grizzled locks, they would whisper: "What a terribly plain young woman she must have

been!" They had, in truth, started out as equally charming and, when Mrs. Kane smiled, she was still almost as attractive as Mrs. Slee.

All the ladies were interesting to young Ffolkes. As he read his morning paper he would pause to hear what Mrs. Forrester was saying to Miss Hubbard about Miss Kenny, who was in hospital after an operation for gall-stones. Or perhaps what Miss Green was saying to Mrs. Slee about the quarrel between the Low Church rector and the High Church organist. Almost all the scraps of conversation overheard from the eight small tables at Mrs. Dowling's were concerned with either Church or hospital. Some one of the ladies was always ill or had fallen and hurt herself, and they were every one ardent attendants at church.

They were almost all Anglicans with a small scattering of Presbyterians, and though they were so far away from England, they kept in close touch with the doings of the Church there and the activities of the Royal Family. They read the newspapers too, and were afraid that in the next war England might be the subject of gas attacks from Germany. They were also interested in the doings of their great neighbours, the United States of America. They hoped very much that Mr. Roosevelt would be able to govern that country properly, but they were worried about the racketeering and the lynchings. At the same time they had a pleasant sense of superiority in the fact that there were no lynchings in Canada and no racketeering that they had ever heard of. Indeed most of them were not quite sure what racketeering was. They were

proud of the banking system of their country and approved the promotion young Ffolkes had recently had in the bank where he was employed, though they thought it should have come sooner.

In politics they were pretty evenly divided between Conservative and Liberal as shown by the neatly arranged morning papers on the hall table, each one bearing the name of one of the ladies. Young Ffolkes himself showed a tendency towards a mild Socialism which gave the ladies a good deal of anxiety and increased their sense of responsibility for him.

Indeed he found their interest in his affairs almost overpowering at times. If he were late to breakfast on a weekday morning there was a distinct feeling of apprehension in the room and a flutter of relief stirred their open newspapers when he entered and took his seat at his own small table behind the door. There was no knowing what a young man of his spirit might not get led into in a large city at night, and he with no mother to look after him!

The front door was locked early at Mrs. Dowling's, and it was a rule of the house that any of the guests who stayed out late should lay a slip of paper on the table in the hall informing the parlourmaid of the fact, so that she might stay up to let them in. Young Ffolkes had often a sneaking sort of feeling when, night after night, he laid his slip of paper bearing the words, "Mr. Ffolkes will be out late", on the hall table. Every one of the ladies read this slip, not with disapproval, as he imagined, but with a certain exhilaration. It was almost as though she were out with him herself.

PETER—A ROCK

On those occasional nights when he had a little poker party in his own room and his friends gave vent to loud masculine guffaws he felt distinctly anxious for fear the ladies should be disturbed in their sleep. But if they were, it was only to smile indulgently and think, "What a good time young Ffolkes is having to-night!"

They were the kindest lot of women imaginable. In all the five years he had lived among them he had never heard a mean or sneering remark, though occasionally their patience was almost exhausted by Miss Hubbard's excessive use of the telephone.

Perhaps their good humour was partly dependent on the excellent meals prepared by Mrs. Dowling's cook, Henry, who had been with her longer than even the oldest boarder. Henry's joints were done to a turn, his gravies and sauces perfect; while his gingerbread and the popovers for Sunday morning breakfast were enough to make the ladies forget all their doctors' warnings.

Everyone was, in short, extremely comfortable at Mrs. Dowling's. The seventeen female guests were no longer hampered by husbands or other male hangers-on who might have interfered with them, and the only man among them was their darling.

But from the time Peter arrived on the scene, he had his share of their devotion. His vitality and his ceaseless expression of it were a wonder and delight. At first young Ffolkes arranged that Peter should spend his days in a kennel with a small wire enclosure about it, and his nights in a dog basket at the foot of Ffolkes's bed, but it was impossible to carry that arrangement out for any length of time.

MAZO DE LA ROCHE

It was lovely autumn weather. A group of the ladies stood about the kennel gazing down at Peter, who, on hind legs, pawed the barrier between him and them and threw all his puppy soul into his cajoling eyes.

"Poor little fellow!" said Mrs. Forrester, "it does seem hard to be shut in there."

"How he wriggles!" said Miss Green.

"Peter, Peter, nice little Peter!" exclaimed Mrs. Kane, who had been the first to suggest his name. She put her hand on his head and, in an instant, he had given it a playful gnaw, then kissed it and covered it with slobber. But she did not mind. There was something in the feel of that agile, wet tongue.

"Poor little soul!" she said, wiping her hand on her handkerchief. "He is so terribly lonely."

Bereft of her hand, Peter began to bite the wire netting, his teeth of a marvellous whiteness and his gums of a marvellous firm pinkness exciting the envy of his audience. He made sounds that were half whine, half panting, and wholly imploring.

"I'm going to have him out of there for a bit," said Miss Hubbard, dictatorially. She bent over, took him under the armpits and lifted him out.

Scarcely had his feet touched the close-mown lawn when he set off in a mad circling of joy. Round and round and in and out among the ladies he whirled, uttering glad yelps. He leaped upon Miss Hubbard and left paw-marks all down her front. He caught Mrs. Forrester by the ankle and made a ladder in her new silk stockings. He gave such a tug at Mrs. Kane's skirt from

behind that she all but sat down on him. Then he took a flying leap over the geranium bed and rushed towards the tall garbage tin that stood by the back entrance. He stood on his hind legs and pushed the lid deftly aside with his muzzle. He found a piece of fat meat and bolted it.

"Peter! Peter!" the ladies screamed in unison and they ran after him as they had not run in twenty years.

With a wave of his tail he fled before them. He sped along the concrete walk that led to the street where tram cars, motors and lorries thundered past. He headed for certain destruction and might have suffered it had not Mrs. Slee, going out to make a call, seen him and heard the cries.

"I saved his life!" she said firmly. "He would have been utterly smashed if it had not been for me!"

"He would," they all agreed but Miss Hubbard and she hung her head.

"He was so pathetic," she said, "and he is such a puppy!"

"Well," repeated Mrs. Slee, "I saved his life, but I shall not say anything about it to Mr. Ffolkes."

Peter, with a swift undulation of his body, turned his muzzle towards her face and licked it gratefully. His tail beat against her thighs. Still carrying him, she led the way back to his kennel followed by the others. When he was safe inside his wire enclosure she examined her dress.

"Oh, Bessie," exclaimed her friends, "you will have to go back and change! You can't go out to tea looking like that!"

MAZO DE LA ROCHE

"I shall simply say", returned Mrs. Slec, "that I have saved a life." Looking very lovely she sailed away.

After that the ladies satisfied themselves by presenting Peter with rubber bones, rubber balls and arrowroot biscuits in his enclosure, but every evening young Ffolkes took him by the scruff and lifted him on to the lawn when at least half a dozen of the seventeen ladies were always there to watch and encourage his mad gambollings. Sometimes Henry, the cook, gave him a bit of freedom and many a surreptitious meal from the kitchen, in spite of Ffolkes's orders to the contrary. Peter was consistently over-fed and fed the wrong thing, but his activities and his mad spirits were such that his gastric juices flowed like the wind. As for the dog-basket at the foot of young Ffolkes's bed, Peter had outgrown it before its cushion was more than half chewed up.

As the winter came on Peter spent less and less time in his run. Henry often took him into the kitchen for warmth and from there he found his way through the serving-room into the hall. The ladies, with one accord, agreed that the dining-room was no place for him. When he showed his nose there there was a chorus of, "Out, Peter! Out, naughty dog!" in tones varying from Mrs. Slec's high refined voice to Miss Hubbard's deep rough one. He would grin sheepishly at them, wave his tail and back away. Finally he took to lying on the large sofa in the hall, opposite the door of the dining-room, through which he surveyed them with the lofty air of a sultan appraising his harem.

Occasionally, very occasionally, only when the door

at the end of the passage was shut and he could not find his way out in time, he went into the drawing-room and made a puddle in the dark corner behind the piano.

Mrs. Forrester, who always played a little on the piano directly after lunch—Mendelssohn's *Consolation*, if the lunch was not so good; a Strauss waltz if it were better than usual—invariably discovered the mishap. She would throw up her hands and exclaim: "Peter has made a puddle!"

"How many times is this?"

"It is the third time."

"No—there was that other time—right in the middle of the room. This is the fourth."

"Nonsense! I counted that. This is the third."

Then another voice, "I have kept count absolutely. This is only the third!"

"But you all keep forgetting the time in the very middle of the room."

"I *think* I am able to count up to *three*."

"Oh, well, if you're going to be annoyed——"

"I'm not annoyed."

"Of course, none of us is annoyed——"

"But I don't like to see the poor little fellow blamed for what he hasn't done."

"The point is that he ought to be whipped."

"Shall we tell Mr. Ffolkes?"

"Heavens, no!"

They were all agreed on that point.

The object of the discussion lay flat on his back looking wistfully up into the faces above him, his paws drooping

above his upturned snow-white belly, his plumed tail waiting to be released into activity. He could gauge to a nicety the moment when it was proper for him to roll over on to his feet and act as though nothing had happened, while Alice, the parlourmaid, mopped up the puddle.

In the spring Peter was a year old and had developed a new dignity and repose. He no longer chewed up cushions or carried his master's slippers downstairs or dragged intimate garments belonging to the ladies on to the landing. He became fastidious in his habits and in his person, showing distinct pride when his master had given him a bath and an extra good grooming. He would sit for hours on the porch watching the passing traffic or escorting each of his seventeen ladies to the corner, when they walked out, and meeting them on their return. But he reserved a special welcome for young Ffolkes, rushing at him with joyous barks when his slight figure separated itself from a group alighting from a tram. He went into the house and upstairs with him to their room. He displayed the room to him with confidential glances, as though saying, "I have guarded this for you all day. Now it is yours and mine to enjoy."

But, though Peter was on confidential terms with his master, he felt no great love for him. Ffolkes was to him just a different sort of lady guest, stronger, more intimate, and rather more precious because he was away so much. Even when they went on their evening walks together or Sunday tramps outside the city, he escorted young Ffolkes very much as he escorted the other guests.

PETER—A ROCK

Ffolkes felt this lack in their comradeship and it troubled him because, when he had acquired Peter, he had been confident of a special great love between them.

It was not till the summer holidays that the great love came. One by one the ladies drifted away to the pleasant places where they spent the hot weather. Mrs. Forrester and Mrs. Slee went to relatives in England. Miss Green and Miss Hubbard went on motor tours. Mrs. Kane and Miss Kenny owned summer cottages. Of the seventeen, only three were left and they the least interesting to Peter. The house was quiet, the weather hot. He had never had so little appetite. He even discovered that he had got fleas and fussed over them night and day. In his search for them he pulled out chunks of his hair and left them about the house. Mrs. Dowling told him what she thought of him for this, which was not flattering, and Henry the cook, in compensation, gave him a greasy bone and he was sick.

Then August came and young Ffolkes's holidays. He had a whole month this year because he had taken on a good deal of responsibility in the past months and badly needed the rest.

He spent the first day of them in shopping for a trip to the North. He had hired a tent and a canoe and he bought a second-hand car. He was so excited when he came home that night that he snatched up Peter in his arms and hugged him till it hurt. Peter gave an hilarious bark and, when he was put down, shook his cushion as he had not shaken it for months.

The next day he could scarcely believe his eyes, or his ears, or any of his five exquisitely acute senses.

MAZO DE LA ROCHE

In the first place young Ffolkes did not go away after breakfast as usual. Yet it was not his Sunday way of staying at home. He behaved quite differently. Right after breakfast he began stowing things away in boxes while Peter looked on grinning, and once, just to be in the game, dragged one of the garments out again, for which he got a playful cuff. Then, when all was packed and carried down the two flights of stairs to the hall, Ffolkes disappeared for a few minutes. But Peter knew he was coming back and sat guarding the luggage with a grand possessive air.

When young Folkes reappeared it was at the wheel of his own new car. He was bare-headed and all his wiry mouse-coloured hair stood on end. There was colour in his usually pale cheeks. He jumped out and began stowing away his belongings. Peter never left his side.

"Now," exclaimed Ffolkes, "in you get, old man! Our own car! Yours and mine! And mind you don't fall out."

Peter braced himself on the seat. He took his place with assurance. Whatever he was in for, he was in for it with a whole heart. Mrs. Dowling, the three remaining guests and Alice, the parlour-maid, waved good-bye from the steps, Peter raised his voice and barked.

"Isn't he a proud one?" cried Alice.

The dry hot air of the city was left behind and they were gliding along the country road where they had often walked on a Sunday. Peter's eyes roved over the fields, his nostrils quiveringly drew in the exciting scents. He pressed his nails into the seat of the car making sure

PETER—A ROCK

of his hold. Now and again Ffolkes's hand stole from the wheel and buried itself in the depths of Peter's snow-white ruff.

But, after a while, there was nothing familiar to be seen. They passed through villages where dogs ran out and barked at them and were ignored by Peter. They went up hill and down hill and, at last, at the edge of a little wood, where a spring glimmered on the side of the bank, the car was drawn up and they got out for lunch.

Never before had they had their meal on the ground together. At first, because the food was laid on the grass, Peter thought everything was for him and circled excitedly about trying to decide what he should attack first. But he soon discovered that the meal was to be shared and settled down to devour the enormous collation donated by Henry. But before he could eat he must drink. He had never been more thirsty. He thrust his muzzle into the cold spring and drank till he could drink no more.

They went on and on. In late afternoon the country became wilder, the farms more scattered. There were great dark woods and now and again a rabbit scurried across the road. Peter trembled with excitement. He could not settle down to rest though his legs ached from his strained position. The air had become cool with strange enticing scents in it.

They stopped and had tea, then went on and on. "We must get there before nightfall," said Ffolkes.

They did. In a wildly beautiful spot beside a darkly shining lake he turned the car from what had become no more than a rough track, on to the crunching white

MAZO DE LA ROCHE

gravel of a beach. There, a white pyramid in the dusk, rose their tent. On the fine sand, on the water's edge, lay their canoe. A man came out of the tent.

"I've got everything ready for you, sir. I began to think you'd lost your way."

"Thank goodness, I didn't do that! I made pretty good time considering it's my first long drive. But I should never have found this place after dark." He looked about him exhausted but happy.

Peter moved warily about investigating it all. He had been transported into a life so new, so strange, he could not comprehend it. Yet, through all his sensitive being, there was a wild response to this strangeness. It was as though he had come home, to a home that was not known to him, yet was of his essence.

The man, having done all that was needed, stepped into a canoe and, with a few practised strokes, slid swiftly from the beach. Peter stood at the water's edge watching him go.

"That's a fine collie you've got," called back the man. "He'll have a good time here."

"Yes," answered Ffolkes. "He's a good dog." He came to the water's edge and squatted beside Peter.

"Are you a good dog, Pete?" he murmured. "Are we going to have a good time? Lord, I'm tired, and so happy I don't know what to do!"

The first thing he did was to have a swim. Peter had seen him in the bath before, but never such a bath as this! Ffolkes stood straight and white in the firelight for a moment, then ran swiftly out into the water and plunged.

PETER—A ROCK

Peter stood bewildered, half frightened. He uttered little reproachful whines. Then, when he saw his master's arms breasting the deep darkness, further and further from shore, he gave a succession of loud agonized barks that ended in a howl.

"Come on, come on, Peter, you dude," cried Ffolkes.

Peter ran into the water a little way, then back to the shore, barking more wildly than ever.

"Come along, Peter," cried Ffolkes.

Before he realized it, quite knew what he was doing, Peter found himself in that deep cool wetness, paw over paw, muzzle held up, straining towards that white loved form. For in that moment he discovered that he loved young Ffolkes and did not want him out of his sight.

Now a new life began for the two. They were alone together, isolated, as though the only people on earth, except for the man who reappeared twice each week bringing bread and meat and fruit.

They woke early in the chill pine-scented stillness of their tent, stretched, yawned, romped for a bit before they rose and went out into the sun. Then came the race to the lake, the joyous plunge and the swimming side by side. While Ffolkes fried his bacon over the fire on the beach, Peter ran like a young wolf through the woods, chasing wild things, intoxicated by this sudden spacious freedom.

He learned to sit motionless as a statue in the stern of the canoe. They explored the shores of the lake and made expeditions up winding little rivers half hidden in the forest. He learned to go about his own business while

MAZO DE LA ROCHE

Ffolkes stood on a jutting rock fishing for bass. Once he surprised a deer and her fawn and chased them for many miles, not returning till evening, tired out and smelling of bracken.

"Don't do that again, Pete," begged Ffolkes. "You gave me a terrible fright."

All his former life faded from Peter's mind. The seventeen ladies at Mrs. Dowling's were as though they had never been. He and young Ffolkes were gods who would continue in this noble round for ever.

But August drew to an end. The sunlight took on a yellowish tone, the bracken dried and there came the smell of distant forest fires. Young Ffolkes packed his boxes and stowed them in the back of the car.

They stayed up late that night, sitting close together before the fire that turned the branches of the towering pines to burnished metal and showed young Ffolkes's face and arms of a rich bronze. He held Peter close to him.

"It's been a great time, old man," he said, "and we'll do it every year—you and I—as long as we live." Under his hand he felt Peter's heart beating ardent and strong.

A number of the ladies had returned from their holiday when dog and master walked into Mrs. Dowling's. There were exclamations of astonishment at the young man's coat of tan and delight at Peter's size and beauty.

He had indeed developed into a noble-looking dog. The shallow sparkle had left his eyes and, in its place, there was a steady glow of pride and race. When he raised them to young Ffolkes's face they were filled with an abiding love and confidence.

PETER—A ROCK

Now he remembered the routine of the day at Mrs. Dowling's. He accepted the return to it without dismay. He knew that the time would come when he and the one person who was now necessary to him, would once more find the forest and the lake.

He stalked about the garden investigating each remembered corner. Without effort he leaped over the wire fence of his run and put his long nose disdainfully into his kennel and leaped out again. When Henry brought him a large juicy bone between meals, he waved his tail in thanks, guarded it for a decent space, then buried it among the shrubs. When the ladies offered him sweets and bits of cake, he ate them good-humouredly but without enthusiasm. All his senses were concentrated on the return of Ffolkes from the bank.

They had been back only three days when the news of Ffolkes's promotion came. When he entered the dining-room that night several of the ladies noticed his unusual aspect. If a man can, at the same moment, look both elated and depressed, Ffolkes did. In the drawing-room after dinner he told them how he had been transferred to an excellent position in the London branch of his bank. What almost spoiled his pleasure was that he would not be able to take Peter. No dog might enter England without enduring a quarantine of six months. Ffolkes could not think of that for Peter. It would break his spirit. Besides, what should he do with him in London? Young Ffolkes's bronzed forehead was creased with anxiety.

Mrs. Dowling offered to keep Peter. All the ladies

MAZO DE LA ROCHE

would be so kind to him. But Ffolkes could not contemplate such a life for him now. Peter was grown up. He was a man's dog.

Then Pryce came forward. He was the manager of the bank where Ffolkes was employed. Ffolkes had been to his house several times, had admired Pryce's pretty wife and two attractive children. The children would love to have a dog. Every summer they went to the country and that would be good for Peter.

So, one evening, young Ffolkes drove his car to the Pryce's house, with Peter sitting very upright beside him. Ffolkes's heart was as heavy as lead.

"Gosh," he thought, as he turned into the drive, "if I had known it would be like this I don't believe I should have taken the job!"

The children, Joan and Kenneth, made a great deal of of Peter. Pretty Mrs. Pryce exclaimed at his beauty and Pryce told young Ffolkes not to worry, that they would give Peter the very best care possible.

And so they did, according to their understanding, after the first days when he would have nothing done for him but sat still, as though carved, watching the door, waiting for young Ffolkes's return; rejecting all food; refusing, with threatening lip, to be touched; refusing to take exercise. He was a symbol of calm patience, trusting the awaited footstep, waiting to leap into joyful activity.

A leather armchair that Ffolkes had sat in on the night he had brought Peter to the Pryce's, Peter now appropriated. He sat in front of it all day long, sometimes resting his long head on the seat, and curled up in it at night.

PETER—A ROCK

When the children teasingly touched the chair he gave a low growl that made Mrs. Pryce exclaim to her husband:

"I wish you had never brought that brute here! He'll end by biting one of the children. You'll see if he doesn't."

"Give him time," said Pryce. "He'll be all right. He's not used to us yet."

At last Peter turned to his dish of food and devoured it. He stalked through the open doors into the fenced-in garden at the back of the house and investigated every corner of it. That night he submitted to having his lead snapped on and Pryce took him for a walk. Pryce came home tired out. The big-boned heavy dog had dragged him all the way, sniffing, searching for the scent of the one he loved.

After the time of anxious watching came a time of spiritless acquiescence. He allowed the children to pull him about. He stood submissive while Mrs. Pryce brushed his long silky coat. She liked having a handsome dog about, because it was the fashionable thing to do. She had the children photographed with him and sent one of the pictures to young Ffolkes, who had it framed for his room in London. On it she had written, in large black writing, "Joan and Kenneth with their faithful friend, Peter."

She had strange ideas, gathered from the advertisers of dog foods, about what a dog should have to eat. She did not at all approve of what Ffolkes had told her of Peter's former diet. Now he was given only one meal a day, that of a prepared food moistened with water and,

MAZO DE LA ROCHE

at night, a small, hard dog biscuit. He grew gaunt and yet, in an austere way, more beautiful. Everyone admired him. He was "That beautiful Scotch collie of the Pryces's". Mrs. Pryce entered him in a show. He took second prize and might have taken first had he not been so spiritless. She proudly led him about showing off his ribbon.

At home he spent almost all his time guarding the leather chair. He would allow no one to touch it, but sat with his long delicate muzzle resting on one of the padded arms.

On one of the occasions when Ffolkes had been a guest of the Pryces's he had, to please the children, made a record on the dictaphone which Pryce had in his study. One night Joan had the idea of letting Peter hear his distant master's voice. They were all in the room together, a bright fire was blazing in the grate.

Now came Ffolkes's voice, terribly familiar. "Hello—hello, children! How are you? Pretty well, eh? What shall I say to you? Why, look here, I'll tell you—I've got a dog, a lovely dog—a Scotch collie—his name is Peter, Peter —! !"

At the first sound of Ffolkes's voice Peter sat erect. He sat as though listening with his whole being, drinking in that precious voice with every hair of his beautiful coat. Then, with a bark in which all the longing of months burst its bounds, he leaped to the dictaphone, rushed round it frantically and, as the voice ceased, looked in consternation at the box from which it had proceeded.

There was a burst of delighted laughter from the children. Mrs. Pryce joined in with, "Well, isn't that

PETER—A ROCK

amazing? He remembers perfectly. I must write and tell Mr. Ffolkes."

But Pryce observed, "I don't think it is quite fair to the poor brute. Look at him—he's beside himself."

"Oh, Daddy, Daddy, I want to do it again!"

"Please, please, Daddy!" chimed in Kenneth.

"No," said Pryce. "It will unsettle him."

"Nonsense," said his wife.

But Pryce was firm.

But he could not know what was going on when he was away. It became a favourite game with the children to let Peter hear Ffolkes's voice. The result was always the same. The terrible tension. The joyous outcry. The bewilderment. The despair. The abject creeping back to his post by the chair.

Then one day, before Peter could return to it, Kenneth scrambled into the seat of the chair and curled up there. When Peter approached he kicked at him and shouted:

"Get out, Peter! My chair now!"

In a flash Peter was on him, had dragged him from the chair, shaken him and stood over him, every fang showing.

When Pryce came home he found a distraught wife. Fiercely she poured out the whole story. She had had the doctor to see Kenneth and fortunately, by a miracle, it seemed, he was not hurt but dreadfully shocked, poor darling! The dog must be shot or sent away. She couldn't bear to have him in the house.

"Kenneth brought it on himself," said Pryce, pale and worried. "He must never tease him again. I'll give Peter

M A Z O D E L A R O C H E

a good thrashing and I do want you to give him another chance."

He went to the garage and got a short length of rubber hose from it. He found Peter in the cellar and beat him till his arm ached. He was left there all the next day.

When Pryce returned that evening he went to release him. He had an embarrassed, almost shamefaced, feeling as he descended the stairs. He went to where he could see Peter sitting upright in the twilight, but he felt that he must be firm.

"Come here," he said authoritatively.

Peter rose, approached him, looking him full in the eyes with a remote dignity. They went up the stairs together.

Mrs. Pryce gave him another chance. She wanted, if possible, to keep him for exhibiting, and the children had promised never to tease him again. The leather arm-chair had been sent away to be sold.

Peter seemed not to notice its absence. He was a different dog. Even when Joan and Kenneth, their parents being safely out of the house, put young Ffolkes's voice on the dictaphone, Peter did not turn his head to listen.

He sat immovable, cold and hard. Nothing could hurt him now. He had become Peter—a rock.

BY
ZANE GREY

★

DON

It has taken me years to realize the greatness of a dog; and often as I have told the story of Don—his love of freedom and hatred of men—how I saved his life and how he saved mine—it never was told as I feel it now.

I saw Don first at Flagstaff, Arizona, where arrangements had been made for me to cross the desert with Buffalo Jones and a Mormon caravan *en route* to Lee's Ferry on the Colorado River. Jones had brought a pack of nondescript dogs. Our purpose was to cross the river and skirt the Vermilion Cliffs, and finally work up through Buckskin Forest to the north rim of the Grand Canyon, where Jones expected to lasso mountain lions and capture them alive. The most important part of our outfit, of course, was the pack of hounds. Never had I seen such a motley assembly of canines. They did not even have names. Jones gave me the privilege of finding names for them.

Among them was a hound that seemed out of place because of his superb proportions, his sleek, dark, smooth skin, his noble head, and great, solemn black eyes. He had

ZANE GREY

extraordinarily long ears, thick-veined and faintly tinged with brown. Here was a dog that looked to me like a thoroughbred. My friendly overtures to him were unnoticed. Jones said he was part bloodhound and had belonged to an old Mexican don in southern California. So I named him Don.

We were ten days crossing the Painted Desert, and protracted horseback-riding was then so new and hard for me that I had no enthusiasm left to scrape acquaintance with the dogs. Still, I did not forget and often felt sorry for them as they limped along, clinking their chains under the wagons. Even then I divined that horses and dogs were going to play a great part in my Western experience.

At Lee's Ferry we crossed the Colorado and I was introduced to the weird and wild canyon country, with its golden-red walls and purple depths. Here we parted with the caravan and went on with Jones's rangers, Jim and Emmet, who led our outfit into such a wonderful region as I had never dreamed of. We camped several days on the vast range where Jones let his buffalo herd run wild. One day the Arizonians put me astride a white mustang that apparently delighted in carrying a tenderfoot. I did not then know what I was soon to learn—that the buffalo always chased this mustang off the range. When I rode up on the herd, to my utter amazement and terror they took after me and—— But I am digressing, and this is a dog story.

Once across the river, Jones had unchained the dogs and let them run on ahead or lag behind. Most of them lagged. Don for one, however, did not get sore feet. Beyond the buffalo range we entered the sage, and here Jones began to

D O N

train the dogs in earnest. He carried on his saddle an old blunderbuss of a shotgun, about which I had wondered curiously. I had supposed he meant to use it to shoot small game.

Moze, our black-and-white dog, and the ugliest of the lot, gave chase to a jack rabbit.

"Hyar, you Moze, come back!" bawled Jones in stentorian tones. But Moze paid no attention. Jones whipped out the old shotgun and before I could utter a protest he had fired. The distance was pretty far—seventy yards or more—but Moze howled piercingly and came sneaking and limping back. It was remarkable to see him almost crawl to Jones's feet.

"Thar! That'll teach you not to chase rabbits. You're a lion dog!" shouted the old plainsman as if he were talking to a human.

At first I was so astounded and furious that I could not speak. But presently I voiced my feelings.

"Wal, it looks worse than it is," he said, with his keen grey-blue eyes on me. "I'm usin' fine birdshot an' it can't do any more than sting. You see, I've no time to train these dogs. It's necessary to make them see quick that they're not to trail or chase any varmints but lions."

There was nothing for me to do but hold my tongue, though my resentment appeared to be shared by Jim and Emmet. They made excuses for the old plainsman. Jim said: "He shore can make animals do what he wants. But I never seen the dog or hoss that cared two bits for him."

We rode on through the beautiful purple sageland, gradually uphill, toward a black-fringed horizon that was

ZANE GREY

Buckskin Forest. Jack rabbits, cotton-tails, coyotes and foxes, prairie dogs and pack rats infested the sage and engaged the attention of our assorted pack of hounds. All the dogs except Don fell victim to Jones's old blunderbuss; and surely stubborn Moze received a second peppering, this time at closer range. I espied drops of blood upon his dirty white skin. After this it relieved me greatly to see that not even Moze transgressed again. Jones's method was cruel, but effective. He had captured and subdued wild animals since his boyhood. In fact, that had been the driving passion of his life, but no sentiment entered into it.

"Reckon Don is too smart to let you ketch him," Jim once remarked to our leader.

"Wal, I don't know," responded Jones, dubiously. "Mebbe he just wouldn't chase this sage trash. But wait till we jump some deer. Then we'll see. He's got bloodhound in him, and I'll bet he'll run deer. All hounds will, even the best ones trained on bear an' lion."

Not long after we entered the wonderful pine forest the reckoning of Don came as Jones had predicted. Several deer bounded out of a thicket and crossed ahead of us, soon disappearing in the green blur.

"Ahuh! Now we'll see," ejaculated Jones, deliberately pulling out the old shotgun.

The hounds trotted along beside our horses, unaware of the danger ahead. Soon we reached the deer tracks. All the hounds showed excitement. Don let out a sharp yelp and shot away like a streak on the trail.

"Don, come hyar!" yelled Jones, at the same time extending his gun. Don gave no sign he had heard. Then

D O N

Jones pulled trigger and shot him. I saw the scattering of dust and pine needles all round Don. He doubled up and rolled. I feared he might be badly injured. But he got up and turned back. It seemed strange that he did not howl. Jones drew his plunging horse to a halt and bade us all stop.

"Don, come back hyar," he called in a loud, harsh, commanding voice.

The hound obeyed, not sneakingly or cringingly. He did not put his tail between his legs. But he was frightened and no doubt pretty badly hurt. When he reached us I saw that he was trembling all over and that drops of blood dripped from his long ears. What a sombre, sullen gaze in his eyes!

"See hyar," bellowed Jones. "I knowed you was a deer-chaser. Wal, now you're a lion dog."

Later that day, when I had recovered sufficiently from my disapproval, I took Jones to task about this matter of shooting the dogs. I wanted to know how he expected the hounds to learn what he required of them.

"Wal, that's easy," he replied curtly. "When we strike a lion trail I'll put them on it—let them go. They'll soon learn."

It seemed plausible, but I was so incensed that I doubted the hounds would chase anything; and I resolved that if Jones shot Don again I would force the issue and end the hunt unless assured there would be no more of such drastic training methods.

Soon after this incident we made camp on the edge of a beautiful glade where a snowbank still lingered and a

ZANE GREY

stream of water trickled down into a green swale. Before we got camp pitched a band of wild horses thudded by, thrilling me deeply. My first sight of wild horses! I knew I should never forget that splendid stallion, the leader, racing on under the trees, looking back at us over his shoulder.

At this camp I renewed my attempts to make friends with Don. He had been chained apart from the other dogs. He ate what I fetched him, but remained aloof. His dignity and distrust were such that I did not risk laying a hand on him then. But I resolved to win him if it were possible. His tragic eyes haunted me. There was a story in them I could not read. He always seemed to be looking afar. On this occasion I came to the conclusion that he hated Jones.

Buckskin Forest was well named. It appeared to be full of deer, the large black-tailed species known as mule deer. This species must be related to the elk. The size and beauty of them, the way they watched with long ears erect and then bounded off as if on springs, never failed to thrill me with delight.

As we travelled on, the forest grew wilder and more beautiful. In the park-like glades a bleached white grass waved in the wind and bluebells smiled wanly. Wild horses outnumbered the deer, and that meant there were some always in sight. A large grey grouse flew up now and then, and most striking of the forest creatures to fascinate me was a magnificent black squirrel, with a long bushy white tail, and tufted ears, and a red stripe down its glossy sides.

We rode for several days through this enchanting wil-

D O N

derness, gradually ascending, and one afternoon we came abruptly to a break in the forest. It was the north rim of the Grand Canyon. My astounded gaze tried to grasp an appalling abyss of purple and gold and red, a chasm too terrible and beautiful to understand all at once. The effect of that moment must have been tremendous, for I have never recovered from it. To this day the thing that fascinates me most is to stand upon a great height—canyon wall, or promontory, or peak—and gaze down into the mysterious colourful depths.

Our destination was Powell's plateau, an isolated cape jutting out into the canyon void. Jones showed it to me—a distant gold-rimmed, black-fringed promontory, seemingly inaccessible and unscalable. The only trail leading to it was a wild-horse hunter's trail, seldom used, exceedingly dangerous. It took us two days over this canyon trail to the Saddle—a narrow strip of land dipping down from the Plateau and reaching up to the main rim. We camped under a vast looming golden wall, so wonderful that it kept me from sleeping. That night lions visited our camp. The hounds barked for hours. This was the first chance I had to hear Don. What a voice he had! Deep, ringing, wild, like the bay of a wolf!

Next morning we ascended the Saddle, from the notch of which I looked down into the chasm still asleep in purple shadows; then we climbed a narrow deer trail to the summit of the Plateau. Here indeed was the grand, wild, isolated spot of my dreams. Indeed, I was in an all-satisfying trance of adventure.

I wanted to make camp on the rim, but Jones laughed at

ZANE GREY

me. We rode through the level, stately forest of pines until we came to a ravine on the north side of which lay a heavy bank of snow. This was very necessary, for there was no water on the Plateau. Jones rode off to scout while the rest of us pitched camp. Before we had completed our tasks a troop of deer appeared across the ravine, and motionless they stood watching us. There were big and little deer, blue-grey in colour, sleek and graceful, so tame that to me it seemed brutal to shoot at them.

Don was the only one of the dogs that espied the deer. He stood up to gaze hard at them, but he did not bark or show any desire to chase them. Yet there seemed to me to be a strange yearning light in his dark eyes. I had never failed to approach Don whenever opportunity afforded, to continue my overtures of friendship. But now, as always, Don turned away from me. He was cold and sombre. I had never seen him wag his tail or whine eagerly as was common with most hounds.

Jones returned to camp jubilant and excited, as far as it was possible for the old plainsman to be. He had found lion trails and lion tracks, and he predicted a great hunt for us.

The Plateau resembled in shape the ace of clubs. It was perhaps six miles long and three or four wide. The body of it was covered with a heavy growth of pine, and the capes that sloped somewhat toward the canyon were thick with sage and cedar. This lower part, with its numerous swales and ravines and gorges, all leading down into the jungle of splintered crags and thicketed slopes of the Grand Canyon, turned out to be a paradise for deer and lion.

D O N

We found many lion trails leading down from the cedared broken rim to the slopes of yellow and red. These slopes really constituted a big country, and finally led to the sheer perpendicular precipices, three thousand feet lower.

Deer were numerous and as tame as cattle on a range. They grazed with our horses. Herds of a dozen or more were common. Once we saw a very large band. Down in the sage and under the cedars and in ravines we found many remains of deer. Jones called these lion-kills. And he frankly stated that the number of deer killed yearly upon the Plateau would be incredible to anyone who had not seen the actual signs.

In two days, we had three captive lions tied up to pine saplings near camp. They were two-year-olds. Don and I had treed the first lion; I had taken pictures of Jones lassoing him; I had jumped off a ledge into a cedar to escape another; I had helped Jones hold a third; I had scratches from lion claws on my chaps, and—— But I keep forgetting that this is not a story about lions. Always before when I have told it I have slighted Don.

One night, a week or more after we had settled in camp, we sat round a blazing red fire and talked over the hunt of the day. We all had our parts to tell. Jones and I had found where a lioness had jumped a deer. He showed me where the lioness had crouched upon a little brushy knoll, and how she had leaped thirty feet to the back of the deer. He showed me the tracks the deer had made—bounding, running, staggering with the lioness upon its back—and where, fully a hundred paces beyond, the big

cat had downed its prey and killed it. There had been a fierce struggle. Then the lioness had dragged the carcass down the slope, through the sage to the cedar tree where her four two-year-old cubs waited. All that we found of the deer were the ragged hide, some patches of hair, cracked bones, and two long ears. These were still warm.

Eventually we got the hounds on this trail and soon put up the lions. I found a craggy cliff under the rim and sat there watching and listening for hours. Jones rode to and fro above me, and at last dismounted to go down to join the other men. The hounds treed one of the lions. How that wild canyon slope rang with barks and bays and yells! Jones tied up this lion. Then the hounds worked up the ragged slope towards me, much to my gratification and excitement. Somewhere near me the lions had taken to cedars or crags, and I strained my eyes searching for them.

At last I located a lion on top of an isolated crag right beneath me. The hounds, with Don and Ranger leading, had been on the right track. My lusty yells brought the men. Then the lion stood up—a long, slender, yellowish cat—and spat at me. Next it leaped off that crag, fully fifty feet to the slope below, and bounded down, taking the direction from which the men had come. The hounds gave chase, yelping and baying. Jones bawled at them, trying to call them off, for what reason I could not guess. But I was soon to learn. They found the lion Jones had captured and left lying tied under a cedar, and they killed it, then took the trail of the other. They treed it far down in the rough jumble of rocks and cedars.

One by one we had ridden back to camp that night,

D O N

tired out. Jim was the last in and he told his story last. And what was my amazement and fright to learn that all the three hours I had sat upon the edge of the caverned wall, the lioness had crouched on a bench above me. Jim on his way up had seen her, and then located her tracks in the dust back of my position. When this fact burst upon me I remembered how I had at first imagined I heard faint panting breaths near me somewhere. I had been too excited to trust my ears.

"Wal," said Jones, standing with the palms of his huge hands to the fire, "we had a poor day. If we had stuck to Don there'd have been a different story. I haven't trusted him. But now I reckon I'll have to. He'll make the greatest lion dog I ever had. Strikes me queer, too, for I never guessed it was in him. He has faults, though. He's too fast. He outruns the other hounds, an' he's goin' to be killed because of that. Some day he'll beat the pack to a mean old Tom lion or a lioness with cubs, an' he'll get his everlasting'. Another fault is, he doesn't bark often. That's bad, too. You can't stick to him. He's got a grand bay, shore, but he saves his breath. Don wants to run an' trail an' fight alone. He's got more nerve than any hound I ever trained. He's too good for his own sake—an' it'll be his death."

Naturally I absorbed all that Buffalo Jones said about dogs, horses, lions, everything pertaining to the West, and I believed it as if it had been gospel. But I observed that the others, especially Jim, did not always agree with our chief in regard to the hounds. A little later, when Jones had left the fire, Jim spoke up with his slow Texas drawl:

"Wal, what does he know about dawgs? I'll tell you

right heah, if he hadn't shot Don we'd had the best hound thet ever put his nose to a track. Don is a wild, strange hound, shore enough. Mebbe he's like a lone wolf. But it's plain he's been mistreated by men. An' Jones has just made him wuss."

Emmet inclined to Jim's point of view. And I respected this giant Mormon who was famous on the desert for his kindness to men and animals. His ranch at Lee's Ferry was overrun with dogs, cats, mustangs, burros, sheep, and tamed wild animals that he had succoured.

"Yes, Don hates Jones and, I reckon, all of us," said Emmet. "Don's not old, but he's too old to change. Still, you can never tell what kindness will do to animals. I'd like to take Don home with me and see. But Jones is right. That hound will be killed."

"Now I wonder why Don doesn't run off from us?" inquired Jim.

"Perhaps he thinks he'd get shot again," I ventured.

"If he ever runs away it'll not be here in the wilds," replied Emmet. "I take Don to be about as smart as any dog ever gets. And that's pretty close to human intelligence. People have to live lonely lives with dogs before they understand them. I reckon I understand Don. He's either loved one master once and lost him, or else he has always hated all men."

"Humph! That's shore an idee," ejaculated Jim, dubiously. "Do you think a dog can feel like that?"

"Jim, I once saw a little Indian shepherd dog lie down on its master's grave and die," returned the Mormon, sonorously.

D O N

"Wal, dog-gone me!" exclaimed Jim, in mild surprise.

One morning Jim galloped in, driving the horses pell-mell into camp. Any deviation from the Texan's usual leisurely manner of doing things always brought us up short with keen expectation.

"Saddle up," called Jim. "Shore thar's a chase on. I seen a big red lioness up heah. She must have come down out of the tree whar I hang my meat. Last night I had a haunch of venison. It's gone. . . . Say, she was a beauty. Red as a red fox."

In a very few moments we were mounted and riding up the ravine, with the eager hounds sniffing the air. Always over-anxious in my excitement, I rode ahead of my comrades. The hounds trotted with me. The distance of Jim's meat tree was a short quarter of a mile. I knew well where it was and, as of course the lion trail would be fresh, I anticipated a fine opportunity to watch Don. The other hounds had come to regard him as their leader. When we neared the meat tree, which was a low-branched oak shaded by thick silver spruce, Don elevated his nose high in the air. He had caught a scent even at a distance. Jones had said more than once that Don had a wonderful nose. The other hounds, excited by Don, began to whine and yelp and run around with noses to the ground.

I had eyes only for Don. How instinct he was with life and fire! The hair on his neck stood up like bristles. Suddenly he let out a wild bark and bolted. He sped away from the pack and like a flash passed that oak tree, running with his head high. The hounds strung out after him and soon the woods seemed full of a baying chorus.

ZANE GREY

My horse, Black Bolly, well knew the meaning of that medley and did not need to be urged. He broke into a run and swiftly carried me up out of the hollow and through a brown-aisled pine-scented strip of forest to the canyon.

I rode along the edge of one of the deep indentations on the main rim. The hounds were bawling right under me at the base of a low cliff. They had jumped the lioness. I could not see them, but that was not necessary. They were running fast towards the head of this cove, and I had hard work to hold Black Bolly to a safe gait along that rocky rim. Suddenly she shied, and then reared, so that I fell out of the saddle as much as I dismounted. But I held the bridle, and then jerked my rifle from the saddle sheath. As I ran toward the rim I heard the yells of the men coming up behind. At the same instant I was startled and halted by sight of something red and furry flashing up into a tree right in front of me. It was the red lioness. The dogs had chased her into a pine the middle branches of which were on a level with the rim.

My skin went tight and cold and my heart fluttered. The lioness looked enormous, but that was because she was so close. I could have touched her with a long fishing pole. I stood motionless for an instant, thrilling in every nerve, revelling in the beauty and wildness of that great cat. She did not see me. The hounds below engaged all her attention. But when I let out a yell, which I could not stifle, she jerked spasmodically to face me. Then I froze again. What a tigerish yellow flash of eyes and fangs! She hissed. She could have sprung from the tree to the rim and

upon me in two bounds. But she leaped to a ledge below the rim, glided along that, and disappeared.

I ran ahead and with haste and violence clambered out upon a jutting point of the rim, from which I could command the situation. Jones and the others were riding and yelling back where I had left my horse. I called for them to come.

The hounds were baying along the base of the low cliff. No doubt they had seen the lioness leap out of the tree. My eyes roved everywhere. This cove was a shallow V-shaped gorge, a few hundred yards deep and as many across. Its slopes were steep, with patches of brush and rock.

All at once my quick eye caught a glimpse of something moving up the opposite slope. It was a long red pantherish shape. The lioness! I yelled with all my might. She ran up the slope and at the base of the low wall she turned to the right. At that moment Jones strode heavily over the rough loose rocks of the promontory toward me.

"Where's the cat?" he boomed, his grey eyes flashing. In a moment more I had pointed her out. "Ha! I see. . . . Don't like that place. The canyon boxes. She can't get out. She'll turn back."

The old hunter had been quick to grasp what had escaped me. The lioness could not find any break in the wall and manifestly she would not go down into the gorge. She wheeled back along the base of this yellow cliff. There appeared to be a strip of bare clay or shale rock against which background her red shape stood out clearly. She glided along, slowing her pace, and she turned her gaze across the gorge.

ZANE GREY

Then Don's deep bay rang out from the slope to our left. He had struck the trail of the lioness. I saw him running down. He leaped in long bounds. The other hounds heard him and broke for the brushy slope. In a moment they had struck the scent of their quarry and given tongue.

As they started down Don burst out of the willow thicket at the bottom of the gorge and bounded up the opposite slope. He was five hundred yards ahead of the pack. He was swiftly climbing. He would run into the lioness.

Jones gripped my arm in his powerful hand.

"Look!" he shouted. "Look at that fool hound! . . . Runnin' uphill to get to that lioness. She won't run. She's cornered. She'll meet him. She'll kill him. . . . Shoot her! Shoot her!"

I scarcely needed Jones's command to stir me to save Don, but it was certain that the old plainsman's piercing voice made me tremble. I knelt and levelled my rifle. The lioness showed red against the grey—a fine target. She was gliding more and more slowly. She saw or heard Don. The gunsight wavered. I could not hold steady. But I had to hurry. My first bullet struck two yards below the beast, puffing the dust. She kept on. My second bullet hit behind her. Jones was yelling in my ear. I could see Don out of the tail of my eye. . . . Again I shot. Too high! But the lioness jumped and halted. She lashed with her tail. What a wild picture! I strained—clamped every muscle, and pulled trigger. My bullet struck right under the lioness, scattering a great puff of dust and gravel in her face. She bounded ahead a few yards and up into a cedar tree. An instant later

D O N

Don flashed over the bare spot where she had waited to kill him, and in another his deep bay rang out under the cedar.

"Treed, by gosh!" yelled Jones, joyfully pounding me on the back with his huge fist. "You saved that fool dog's life. She'd have killed him shore. . . . Wal, the pack will be there pronto, an' all we've got to do is go over an' tie her up. But it was a close shave for Don."

That night in camp Don was not in the least different from his usual sombre self. He took no note of my proud proprietorship or my hovering near him while he ate the supper I provided, part of which came from my own plate. My interest and sympathy had augmented to love.

Don's attitude toward the captured and chained lions never ceased to be a source of delight and wonder to me. All the other hounds were upset by the presence of big cats. Moze, Sounder, Tige, Ranger, would have fought these collared lions. Not so Don! For him they had ceased to exist. He would walk within ten feet of a hissing lioness without the slightest sign of having seen or heard her. He never joined in the howling chorus of the dogs. He would go to sleep close to where the lions clanked their chains, clawed the trees, whined and spat and squalled.

Several days after that incident of the red lioness we had a long and severe chase through the brushy cedar forest on the left wing of the Plateau. I did well to keep the hounds within earshot. When I arrived at the end of that run I was torn and blackened by the brush, wet with sweat, and hot as fire. Jones, lasso in hand, was walking round a large cedar under which the pack of hounds was clamouring.

Jim and Emmet were seated on a stone, wiping their red faces.

"Wal, I'll rope him before he rests up," declared Jones.

"Wait till—I get—my breath," panted Emmet.

"We shore oozed along this mawnin'," drawled Jim.

Dismounting, I untied my camera from the saddle and then began to peer up into the bushy cedar.

"It's a Tom lion," declared Jones. "Not very big, but he looks mean. I reckon he'll mess us up some."

"Haw! Haw!" shouted Jim, sarcastically. The old plainsman's imperturbability sometimes wore on our nerves.

I climbed a cedar next to the one in which the lion had taken refuge. From a topmost fork, swaying to and fro, I stood up to photograph our quarry. He was a good-sized animal, tawny in hue, rather grey of face, and a fierce-looking brute. As the distance between us was not far, my situation was as uncomfortable as thrilling. He snarled at me and spat viciously. I was about to abandon my swinging limb when the lion turned away from me to peer down through the branches.

Jones was climbing into the cedar. Low and deep the lion growled. Jones held in one hand a long pole with a small fork at the end, upon which hung the noose of his lasso. Presently he got far enough up to reach the lion. Usually he climbed close enough to throw the rope, but evidently he regarded this beast as dangerous. He tried to slip the noose over the head of the lion. One sweep of a big paw sent pole and noose flying. Patiently Jones made ready and tried again, with similar result. Many times he

D O N

tried. His patience and perseverance seemed incredible. One attribute of his great power to capture and train wild animals here asserted itself. Finally the lion grew careless or tired, on which instant Jones slipped the noose over its head.

Drawing the lasso tight, he threw his end over a thick branch and let it trail down to the men below. "Wait now!" he yelled and quickly backed down out of the cedar. The hounds were leaping eagerly.

"Pull him off that fork an' let him down easy so I can rope one of his paws."

It turned out, however, that the lion was hard to dislodge. I could see his muscles ridge and bulge. Dead branches cracked, the tree-top waved. Jones began to roar in anger. The men replied with strained hoarse voices. I saw the lion drawn from his perch and, clawing the branches, springing convulsively, he disappeared from my sight.

Then followed a crash. The branch over which Jones was lowering the beast had broken. Wild yells greeted my startled ears and a perfect din of yelps and howls. Pandemonium had broken loose down there. I fell more than I descended from that tree.

As I bounded erect I espied the men scrambling out of the way of a huge furry wheel. Ten hounds and one lion comprised that brown whirling ball. Suddenly out of it a dog came hurtling. He rolled to my feet, staggered up.

It was Don. Blood was streaming from him. Swiftly I dragged him aside, out of harm's way. And I forgot the fight. My hands came away from Don wet and dripping

ZANE GREY

with hot blood. It shocked me. Then I saw that his throat had been terribly torn. I thought his jugular vein had been severed. Don lay down and stretched out. He looked at me with those great sombre eyes. Never would I forget! He was going to die right there before my eyes.

"Oh, Don! Don! What can I do?" I cried in horror.

As I sank beside Don one of my hands came in contact with snow. It had snowed that morning and there were still white patches in shady places. Like a flash I ripped off my scarf and bound it round Don's neck. Then I scraped up a double handful of snow and placed that in my bandana handkerchief. This also I bound tightly round his neck. I could do no more. My hope left me then, and I had not the courage to sit there beside him until he died.

All the while I had been aware of a bedlam near at hand. When I looked I saw a spectacle for a hunter. Jones, yelling at the top of his stentorian voice, seized one hound after the other by the hind legs and, jerking him from the lion, threw him down the steep slope. Jim and Emmet were trying to help while at the same time they avoided close quarters with that threshing beast. At last they got the dogs off and the lion stretched out. Jones got up, shaking his shaggy head. Then he espied me and his hard face took on a look of alarm.

"Hyar—you're all—bloody," he panted plaintively, as if I had been exceedingly remiss.

Whereupon I told him briefly about Don. Then Jim and Emmet approached and we all stood looking down on the quiet dog and the patch of bloody snow.

D O N

“Wal, I reckon he’s a goner,” said Jones, breathing hard. “Shore I knew he’d get his everlastin’.”

“Looks powerful like the lion has aboot got his, too,” added Jim.

Emmet knelt by Don and examined the bandage round his neck. “Bleeding yet,” he muttered, thoughtfully. “You did all that was possible. Too bad! . . . The kindest thing we can do is to leave him here.”

I did not question this, but I hated to consent. Still, to move him would only bring on more hæmorrhage and to put him out of his agony would have been impossible for me. Moreover, while there was life there was hope! Scraping up a goodly ball of snow, I rolled it close to Don so that he could lick it if he chose. Then I turned aside and could not look again. But I knew that to-morrow or the following day I would find my way back to this wild spot. The accident to Don and what seemed the inevitable issue weighed heavily upon my mind. Don’s eyes haunted me. I very much feared that the hunt had reached an unhappy ending for me. Next day the weather was threatening and, as the hounds were pretty tired, we rested in camp, devoting ourselves to needful tasks. A hundred times I thought of Don, alone out there in the wild brakes. Perhaps merciful death had relieved him of suffering. I would surely find out on the morrow.

But the indefatigable Jones desired to hunt in another direction next day and, as I was by no means sure I could find the place where Don had been left, I had to defer that trip. We had a thrilling, hazardous, luckless chase, and I for one gave up before it ended.

ZANE GREY

Weary and dejected, I rode back. I could not get Don off my conscience. The pleasant woodland camp did not seem the same place. For the first time the hissing, spitting, chain-clinking, tail-lashing lions caused me irritation and resentment. I would have none of them. What was the capture of a lot of spiteful, vicious cats to the life of a noble dog? Slipping my saddle off, I turned Black Bolly loose.

Then I imagined I saw a beautiful black long-eared hound enter the glade. I rubbed my eyes. Indeed there was a dog coming. Don! I shouted my joy and awe. Running like a boy, I knelt by him, saying I knew not what. Don wagged his tail! He licked my hand! These actions seemed as marvellous as his return. He looked sick and weak, but he was all right. The handkerchief was gone from his neck but the scarf remained, and it was stuck tight where his throat had been lacerated.

Later Emmet examined Don and said we had made a mistake about the jugular vein being severed. Don's injury had been serious, however, and without the prompt aid I had so fortunately given he would soon have bled to death. Jones shook his grey old locks and said: "Reckon Don's time hadn't come. Hope that will teach him sense." In a couple of days Don had recovered and on the next he was back leading the pack.

A subtle change had come over Don in his relation to me. I did not grasp it so clearly then. Thought and memory afterward brought the realization to me. But there was a light in his eyes for me which had never been there before.

One day Jones and I treed three lions. The largest leaped

D O N

and ran down into the canyon. The hounds followed. Jones strode after them, leaving me alone with nothing but a camera to keep those two lions up that tree. I had left horse and gun far up the slope. I protested; I yelled after him, "What'll I do if they start down?"

He turned to gaze up at me. His grim face flashed in the sunlight.

"Grab a club an' chase them back," he replied.

Then I was left alone with two ferocious-looking lions in a pinon tree scarcely thirty feet high. While they heard the baying of the hounds they paid no attention to me, but after that ceased they got ugly. Then I hid behind a bush and barked like a dog. It worked beautifully. The lions grew quiet. I barked and yelped and bayed until I lost my voice. Then they got ugly again! They started down. With stones and clubs I kept them up there, while all the time I was wearing to collapse. When at last I was about to give up in terror and despair I heard Don's bay, faint and far away. The lions had heard it before I had. How they strained! I could see the beating of their hearts through their lean sides. My own heart leaped. Don's bay floated up, wild and mournful. He was coming. Jones had put him on the back trail of the lion that had leaped from the tree.

Deeper and clearer came the bays. How strange that Don should vary from his habit of seldom baying! There was something uncanny in this change. Soon I saw him far down the rocky slope. He was climbing fast. It seemed I had long to wait, yet my fear left me. On and up he came, ringing out that wild bay. It must have curdled the

blood of those palpitating lions. It seemed the herald of that bawling pack of hounds.

Don espied me before he reached the pinon in which were the lions. He bounded right past it and up to me with the wildest demeanour. He leaped up and placed his forepaws on my breast. And as I leaned down, excited and amazed, he licked my face. Then he whirled back to the tree, where he stood up and fiercely bayed the lions. While I sank down to rest, overcome, the familiar baying chorus of the hounds floated up from below. As usual they were far behind the fleet Don, but they were coming.

Another day I found myself alone on the edge of a huge cove that opened down into the main canyon. We were always getting lost from one another. And so were the hounds. There were so many lion trails that the pack would split, some going one way, some another, until it appeared each dog finally had a lion to himself.

It was a glorious day. From far below, faint and soft, came the strange roar of the Rio Colorado. I could see it winding, sombre and red, through the sinister chasm. Adventure ceased to exist for me. I was gripped by the grandeur and loveliness, the desolation and loneliness, of the supreme spectacle of nature.

Then as I sat there, absorbed and chained, the spell of enchantment was broken by Don. He had come to me. His mouth was covered with froth. I knew what that meant. Rising, I got my canteen from the saddle and poured water into the crown of my sombrero. Don lapped it. As he drank so thirstily I espied a bloody scratch on his nose.

D O N

"Aha! A lion has batted you one, this very morning," I cried. "Don—I fear for you."

He rested while I once more was lost in contemplation of the glory of the canyon. What significant hours these on the lonely heights! But then I only saw and felt.

Presently I mounted my horse and headed for camp, with Don trotting behind. When we reached the notch of the cove the hound let out his deep bay and bounded down a break in the low wall. I dismounted and called. Only another deep bay answered me. Don had scented a lion or crossed one's trail. Suddenly several sharp deep yelps came from below, a crashing of brush, a rattling of stones. Don had jumped another lion.

Quickly I threw off sombrero and coat and chaps. I retained my left glove. Then, with camera over my shoulder and revolver in my belt, I plunged down the break in the crag. My boots were heavy-soled and studded with hobnails. The weeks on these rocky slopes had trained me to fleetness and sure-footedness. I plunged down the sliding slant of weathered stone, crashed through the brush, dodged under the cedars, leaped from boulder to ledge and down from ledge to bench. Reaching a dry stream bed, I espied in the sand the tracks of a big lion, and beside them smaller tracks that were Don's. And as I ran I yelled at the top of my lungs, hoping to help Don tree the lion. What I was afraid of was that the beast might wait for Don and kill him.

Such strenuous exertion required a moment's rest now and then, during which I listened for Don. Twice I heard his bay, and the last one sounded as if he had treed the

lion. Again I took to my plunging, jumping, sliding descent; and I was not long in reaching the bottom of that gorge. Ear and eye had guided me unerringly, for I came to an open place near the main jump-off into the canyon, and here I saw a tawny shape in a cedar tree. It belonged to a big Tom lion. He swayed the branch and leaped to a ledge, and from that down to another, and then vanished round a corner of wall.

Don could not follow down those high steps. Neither could I. We worked along the ledge, under cedars, and over huge slabs of rock toward the corner where our quarry had disappeared. We were close to the great abyss. I could almost feel it. Then the glaring light of a void struck my eyes like some tangible thing.

At last I worked out from the shade of rocks and trees and, turning the abrupt jut of wall, I found a few feet of stone ledge between me and the appalling chasm. How blue, how fathomless! Despite my pursuit of a lion I was suddenly shocked into awe and fear.

Then Don returned to me. The hair on his neck was bristling. He had come from the right, from round the corner of wall where the ledge ran, and where surely the lion had gone. My blood was up and I meant to track that beast to his lair, photograph him if possible, and kill him. So I strode on to the ledge and round the point of wall. Soon I espied huge cat tracks in the dust, close to the base. A well-defined lion trail showed there. And ahead I saw the ledge—widening somewhat and far from level—stretch before me to another corner.

Don acted queerly. He followed me, close at my heels.

D O N

He whined. He growled. I did not stop to think then what he wanted to do. But it must have been that he wanted to go back. The heat of youth and the wildness of adventure had gripped me and fear and caution were not in me.

Nevertheless, my sensibilities were remarkably acute. When Don got in front of me there was something that compelled me to go slowly. Soon, in any event, I should have been forced to that. The ledge narrowed. Then it widened again to a large bench with cavernous walls overhanging it. I passed this safe zone to turn on to a narrowing edge of rock that disappeared round another corner. When I came to this point I must have been possessed, for I flattened myself against the wall and worked round it.

Again the way appeared easier. But what made Don go so cautiously? I heard his growls; still, no longer did I look at him. I felt this pursuit was nearing an end. At the next turn I halted short, suddenly quivering. The ledge ended—and there lay the lion, licking a bloody paw.

Tumultuous indeed were my emotions, yet on that instant I did not seem conscious of fear. Jones had told me never, in close quarters, to take my eyes off a lion. I forgot. In the wild excitement of a chance for an incomparable picture I forgot. A few precious seconds were wasted over the attempt to focus my camera.

Then I heard quick thuds. Don growled. With a start I jerked up to see the lion had leaped or run half the distance. He was coming. His eyes blazed purple fire. They seemed to paralyse me, yet I began to back along the ledge. Whipping out my revolver I tried to aim. But my nerves had undergone such a shock that I could not aim.

The gun wobbled. I dared not risk shooting. If I wounded the lion it was certain he would knock me off that narrow ledge.

So I kept on backing, step by step. Don did likewise. He stayed between me and the lion. Therein lay the greatness of that hound. How easily he could have dodged by me to escape the ledge! But he did not do it.

A precious opportunity presented when I reached the widest part of the bench. Here I had a chance and I recognized it. Then, when the overhanging wall bumped my shoulder, I realized too late. I had come to the narrowing part of the ledge. Not reason but fright kept me from turning to run. Perhaps that might have been the best way out of the predicament. I backed along the strip of stone that was only a foot wide. A few more blind steps meant death. My nerve was gone. Collapse seemed inevitable. I had a camera in one hand and a revolver in the other.

That purple-eyed beast did not halt. My distorted imagination gave him a thousand shapes and actions. Bitter despairing thought flashed through my mind. Jones had said mountain lions were cowards, but not when cornered—never when there was no avenue of escape!

Then Don's haunches backed into my knees. I dared not look down, but I felt the hound against me. He was shaking, yet he snarled fiercely. The feel of Don there, the sense of his courage, caused my cold thick blood to burst into hot gushes. In another second he would be pawed off the ledge or he would grapple with this hissing lion. That meant destruction for both, for they would roll off the ledge.

D O N

I had to save Don. That mounting thought was my salvation. Physically, he could not have saved me or himself, but this grand spirit somehow pierced to my manhood.

Leaning against the wall, I lifted the revolver and steadied my arm with my left hand, which still held the camera. I aimed between the purple eyes. That second was an eternity. The gun crashed. The blaze of one of those terrible eyes went out.

Up leaped the lion, beating the wall with heavy thudding paws. Then he seemed to propel himself outward, off the ledge into space—a tawny spread figure that careened majestically over and over, down—down—down to vanish in the blue depths.

Don whined. I stared at the abyss, slowly becoming unlocked from the grip of terror. I staggered a few steps forward to a wider part of the ledge and there I sank down, unable to stand longer. Don crept to me, put his head in my lap.

I listened, I strained my ears. How endlessly long seemed that lion in falling! But all was magnified. At last puffed up a sliding roar, swelling and dying until again the terrific silence of the canyon enfolded me.

Presently Don sat up and gazed into the depths. How strange to see him peer down! Then he turned his sleek dark head to look at me. What did I see through the sombre sadness of his eyes? He whined and licked my hand. It seemed to me Don and I were more than man and dog. He moved away then round the narrow ledge and I had to summon energy to follow. Shudderingly I turned my back on that awful chasm and held my breath

while I slipped round the perilous place. Don waited there for me, then trotted on. Not until I had gotten safely off that ledge did I draw a full breath. Then I toiled up the steep rough slope to the rim. Don was waiting beside my horse. Between us we drank the rest of the water in my canteen, and when we reached camp night had fallen. A bright fire and a good supper broke the gloom of my mind. My story held those rugged Westerners spellbound. Don stayed close to me, followed me of his own accord, and slept beside me in my tent.

There came a frosty morning when the sun rose red over the ramparts of coloured rock. We had a lion running before the misty shadows dispersed from the canyon depths.

The hounds chased him through the sage and cedar into the wild brakes of the north wing of the Plateau. This lion must have been a mean old Tom, for he did not soon go down the slopes.

The particular section he at last took refuge in was impassable for man. The hounds gave him a gruelling chase, then one by one they crawled up, sore and thirsty. All but Don! He did not come. Jones rolled out his mighty voice, which pealed back in mocking hollow echoes. Don did not come. At noonday Jones and the men left for camp with the hounds.

I remained. I had a vigil there on the lofty rim, alone, where I could peer down the yellow-green slope and beyond to the sinister depths. It was a still day. The silence was overpowering. When Don's haunting bay floated up it shocked me. At long intervals I heard it, fainter and fainter. Then no more!

D O N

Still I waited and watched and listened. Afternoon waned. My horse neighed piercingly from the cedars. The sinking sun began to fire the Pink Cliffs of Utah, and then the hundred miles of immense chasm over which my charmed gaze held dominion. How lonely, how terrifying that stupendous rent in the earth! Lion and hound had no fear. But the thinking, feeling man was afraid. What did they mean—this exquisitely hued and monstrous canyon—the setting sun—the wildness of a lion, the grand spirit of a dog—and the wondering sadness of a man?

I rode home without Don. Half the night I lay awake waiting, hoping. But he did not return by dawn, nor through the day. He never came back.

SRI PRATAP COLLEGE LIBRARY,
SRINAGAR.

BY
RODERICK L. HAIG-BROWN



A LIFE

I

The female panther had travelled more than ten miles, straight from the deep woods, past the two lakes and across open logging works, down to the narrow strip of timber that hides the course of the Alder river for two or three miles above the road. She was heavy with young. Yet she stalked and killed a two-point buck almost without effort and she gorged herself thoroughly before she curled up to sleep a little way from her kill.

In the next day or two she travelled the length and breadth of her chosen strip of timber. It was an isolated strip, left by the loggers through some disagreement among themselves; flanked on both sides, stopped at each end, by barren, burnt-over wastes of logged land. Its width for most of its length was little more than half a mile—the loggers had felled their timber to the very edge of the break-off, where steep banks dropped away two or three hundred feet to the river itself. But within its small area the strip of timber held an endless variety of forest country. There were crab-apple swamps and alder groves, wide, flat benches between steep slopes covered with fine

A L I F E

fir trees and maple trees; other flats, equally wide, that were fearsome tangles of great windfalls and heavy second growth; one great flat down almost on the level of the stream seemed able to support nothing but salmon-berry bushes; here and there, blue steep banks of clay fell sheer away to the river for two hundred feet or more, like precipices.

The deer liked the strip of timber well. At least three black bears roamed the flats nearest to the river, catching humpback salmon; sometimes climbing into crab-apple trees at dusk to feast upon the tiny red apples that were already ripe that early fall. The female learned all these things for herself. After travelling through the full length of the strip of timber only once she seemed to confine herself to the upstream half of it, seldom venturing within a mile of the road. Generally she kept to the very head of the strip, where she had made her first kill. The kill lay in an alder grove; twenty feet above the alder grove was another flat, well-timbered, backed by a timbered slope that climbed a hundred feet into a deep, three-sided bowl in the logged land. It was this open bowl that seemed to please the female especially. Beneath a tangle of big logs at the foot of a few small maple trees she slept away many daylight hours, wearing for herself a bare, flat circle of earth among the bracken.

On the fourth night the female returned to her kill to find that the bears had dragged it several yards and eaten most of what was left of it. She turned away calmly, travelled half a mile down stream and killed again. Killing seemed in some measure to satisfy her hunger, for she ate

only a little meat and then went down to the river to drink. From her drinking place she travelled purposefully to the tangle of windfalls and settled herself on the patch of bare earth. During the night her cubs were born.

The female stayed under the pile of windfalls all through the next day, taking drowsy delight in the three tiny yellow and brown fluffy creatures that stirred under her and around her. While the warm September sun shone down on her in a dusty beam between the windfalls, she lay stretched out; her eyes were almost closed; now and then she breathed deeply in sheer contentment; occasionally her fur twitched or one of her ears flickered to stir away a fly; the three cubs, blind, quarrelsome and determined already, pressed their paws against her udder and sucked her milk with greedy lips and toothless gums. At dusk the cubs were sleeping. The female stood up, then stepped out from under the windfalls, stretched herself and stole softly down the hill, out on to the heavily timbered flat above the alder grove.

At the edge of the flat she turned and followed the stream down to her kill. She fed, slept beside her kill and came back to her cubs in the first daylight.

Twice more in the week after her cubs were born the female killed, and each time she was robbed by the bears after her third or fourth feed. When the cubs were eight days old she left her nest to kill once more. The breeze that had blown steadily upstream for the last two weeks, was now blowing softly downstream. The female sniffed it, seemed to hesitate a moment, then turned up the hill instead of down into the timbered flat as she always had

before. She climbed over the rim of the bowl and came at once upon an old logging grade. For a few hundred yards she followed the grade, then she swung to the right and travelled down for nearly a mile, edging back towards the strip of timber. In the timber she swung again and travelled upstream, hunting with the breeze in her nostrils. Before very long she had killed a yearling doe.

Early next morning two men with shot-guns, a small black spaniel at their heels, were walking along the grade. The older of the two stopped suddenly as he came to the spot where the female had turned from the grade, and stood pointing silently at the ground. The younger man followed the direction of his finger and saw the female's track in the dry sand. He laughed.

"Hunt for panther and you find grouse. Hunt for grouse and you find panther. Fresh too."

The older man pulled a pair of spectacles from the breast pocket of his shirt, wiped them carefully and set them on his nose. Then he stooped down and examined the track.

"Made early last night," he said at last. "A small female." He straightened himself. "What shall we do? Go back for the dogs? Or go on and get some grouse, then come out again this evening?"

"Up to you, Alec," replied the younger man. "By the time we've brought the dogs up here there probably won't be much scent—the sun's hot already. But then she may have been just passing through."

"That's just it. I think we'd better get the dogs."

But the dogs could get no scent that day. Alec Mayhew

followed the track slowly and painfully across the dry, dusty, logged-off land to the edge of the timber. Hugh Davidson, the younger of the two, watched him closely and in silence for the most part, though he swung far to one side or the other now and then in the hope of cutting off the track. He felt no special desire to kill the female, yet he knew that it had to be done—killing panthers was Alec Mayhew's living—and he felt a spur of delight each time he thought of the picture a treed panther makes. To be able to gaze and gaze and gaze, then quietly lead the dogs away from the foot of the tree! But that would only be to leave the female to the mercy of the next hunter that crossed her track—Johnson, or Green, probably; Davidson shook his head at the thought; he hated both men; if there was killing to be done he preferred to do it himself.

At the edge of the timber Mayhew tried to urge the dogs on the track again; but even in the shade the ground was dry and there was no scent. The two men, with the dogs running loose, worked back and forth across the strip of timber for more than two hours. Then they turned away and went home. They had seen enough to know that the female was not just passing through, to guess that she had cubs or was about to have them; and they had marked the timbered flat below her nest as the place she frequented most.

The female had heard the men and dogs as she lay with her cubs in the windfall patch. When it was quite dark she left her nest and stood for a little while with her forepaws on a log, gazing down the hill. As though reassured, she dropped her head to lick her chest, then swung it to

look over her shoulder at the small clump of maples beneath which her cubs lay. Her eyes seemed to stare and stare right through the mass of logs and brush between her and the cubs, straight into the nest where the three little things were huddled together, complaining and restless at the sudden loss of her body's warmth. At last she went on, down from the bowl into the flat below it.

She snarled as she struck the scent of the dogs, but she turned downstream along her usual trail and travelled silently until she came to her kill. She fed, curled herself up a few yards away from the carcass, and slept.

She did not stir when the sun rose. An hour later she stood up suddenly, stretched herself, glanced once at her kill, then started back towards the cubs. When she was still within a hundred yards of her kill she heard the long howl of a hound on a poor scent, midway between her and the nest. She snarled and hesitated. She heard the howl again, much closer. Even as she turned away the scent seemed to grow suddenly stronger. The hound was baying fiercely, coming swiftly towards her. She bounded up the hill, to the foot of an uprooted balsam that had lodged itself in the fork of another tree. She ran a little way up the steeply sloping trunk and stood there without moving, her ears flat back against her skull. Soon the men came up and found her there.

Mayhew and Davidson learned from the female's dead body that she had cubs. Both men had killed females in milk before; both knew that panthers were considered vermin, outlaws with a price set upon their heads by the government. But to Davidson the death of this panther

was a special thing; not a good thing. The strip of timber was very close to his home and he felt that his bullet had shattered something fine and calm and even-tempered, a natural, right thing. He tried to argue with himself, forced himself to admit that other hunters would have found the female's track and killed her. But he still felt that an evil thing had been done. The bright warmth of the September sun, the yellowing maple leaves, the very beauty of all that stretch of forest along the river seemed to emphasize the quality of the happiness he had destroyed.

But to Mayhew he only said: "It shouldn't be hard to find the cubs. How old do you suppose they are?"

"Quite young I should think. There's very little hair worn away from her udder."

"Claire'll want one," said Davidson slowly. "She asked me this morning to tell you that, if we found there were any."

Mayhew smiled. "Guess we'd better find them first. Have you got a hunch?"

"Sure," replied Davidson at once. "That big flat about half a mile back up the river. All her tracks seem to lead from there."

Mayhew nodded. "Yes, that's the most likely place. The little devils may be hard to find though. They're probably too small to move about and they don't give off much scent when they're that small."

That night the cubs huddled together in the nest and slept, protesting their hunger a little. Mayhew and Davidson had searched vainly back and forth through the timber all day. Four days later the cubs opened their eyes for

A L I F E

the first time. They saw the light through the maple trees above them; saw the bare patch of dark brown earth over which they had been scrambling all their lives; saw the dead bracken underneath the windfalls. They were hungry and weak. Mayhew and Davidson were still searching. Mayhew was tired; his face was set and miserable. Davidson was still looking under every windfall and root, not because he hoped to find anything but because he felt bound to keep searching and searching. They sat down to smoke at last, on the bank of the river.

"Seems hopeless, Alec," Davidson said. "But they can't be very far away."

Alec Mayhew shook his head. "I don't know what to think," he replied. "I've never failed to find a bunch of cubs yet, in thirty years of hunting. I hate to think of these poor little devils starving, but I'll have to go home tomorrow. There may be a panther killing sheep down in the valley or anything. I've been away over a week now."

Davidson sat smoking silently, forcing himself to think over every inch of ground in the strip of timber. Everything led back to the big flat they had searched first of all. Yet he knew that the cubs were nowhere on it. And there were a hundred other such flats in the strip of timber. At last he said:

"Let's go back and look through the flat again. All her tracks lead down into it or away from it. When we've tried that we can cut across the slash and go home by the grade."

Mayhew stamped out his cigarette. "The curse of it is that it's just possible they may not be in the timber at all.

It seems very unlikely she'd pick a place in the open, but I'm beginning to think she must have."

They searched the flat again, slowly and carefully. Hugh Davidson told himself that it might be better not to find them. Let them die of starvation; the worst must be over already, and that worst might be less evil than a life of captivity. He tried to laugh at himself for his inconsistency. To be so thoroughly miserable about the suffering of three small creatures, and yet to have caused that suffering by the deliberate slaughter of the female. It seemed absurd. Yet it seemed to him, too, that the cubs had a right to whatever life there could be for them; that they might find moments of joy even in captivity.

The two men turned up from the flat and started across the bowl, towards the old grade. One of the dogs found the patch of windfalls under the maples and bayed deeply. Davidson rushed forward, scrambling over logs and through brush, reached the nest and wrenched the dog away from the cubs. Mayhew came up a moment later and while he held the dogs Davidson knelt on the bare earth of the nest, half laughing, half crying; he gathered up the snarling, spitting, fighting cubs and dropped them one by one into his packsack.

"Lord, Alce, Claire'll be pleased to death." Then: "Why do you suppose she picked this place?"

Mayhew laughed contentedly, holding the frantic dogs. "I should have known it all along. Bears. In another three or four weeks, when the cohoes are running, there'll be a dozen of them down in the timber, yet there's no reason why one would come through here in twenty years."

A L I F E

Davidson said nothing. He saw again what he had shattered. A perfection beyond perfection. To have chosen the lovely strip of timber, for the deer that roamed through it, for the shelter it afforded in a wilderness of logged land, for its apparent safety; and then to have had the knowledge to spurn that shelter and safety for yet greater safety.

"God knows", he told Mayhew, "she deserved to raise them."

II

Piled together in the bottom of the packsack, beset by sounds and scents that they instinctively hated and feared, the cubs were so bewildered that they scarcely felt fear or hate at all. There seemed safety in the darkness; there was comfort for each in the nearness of the two bodies from which it had never been separated; and they all three huddled against the blood-warmth of the man's body. Occasionally one of the dogs would draw close to sniff the packsack; then the cubs struck out fiercely, grating their claws against the canvas, hissing and scolding, in anger and fear. At first, whenever Davidson stepped carelessly and jolted them, they growled long, deep little growls; but eventually they seemed to accept even the unnatural movement as one more gigantic circumstance, against which their protests had no slightest power.

But when Davidson set the pack on the ground outside his house the cubs were aroused again. The mouth of the packsack was opened and they were lifted out, one by one, and held side by side between two large hands. Each cub was growling and hissing, each had set its ears flat against

its head, each had unsheathed the claws on front and hind feet; each would have destroyed utterly anything within the scope of its tiny, fierce strength.

Claire Davidson was wholly delighted with them. Their savage spitting and angry growls, infinitely powerless against the fate that had overtaken them, appealed to her intensely. The five days' search and her husband's misery at being unable to find them had made her long to have a hand in giving them what life was left to them. She looked quickly, anxiously at Mayhew.

"Are you going to let me keep one, Alec?"

The hunter smiled and nodded slowly. "Sure, whichever one you want."

"Choose quickly though, Claire," her husband told her. "Alec wants to get home to-night and as soon as you've made up your mind I'll take the other two out to the car."

"All right," said Claire instantly. "The middle one."

Davidson examined the cub and laughed. "A good choice," he said. "The only female of the three. Now christen her."

Claire thought a moment. "Willow," she said, "for the tree you're standing under."

So Willow, the panther cub, became the property of humans and took up her life with them. Almost immediately, in spite of savage protest, she was laid on her back in Claire's lap and fed from a bottle. Claire's lap was soft and warm and Claire's hand stroked Willow's little round head gently and reassuringly. But Willow was not reassured. Claire's other hand, holding the white, nipped

bottle, was something menacing, something to be attacked lest it attack. Then a fierce paw-stroke tore the rubber nipple from the neck of the bottle and Willow was drenched in milk. She began to lick herself and in so doing she tasted the milk. The bottle, with the nipple readjusted, descended towards her again. With a quick fierce dart of her head she seized the nipple between her gums, clamped her jaws tight shut upon it. Still she would not suck, but in drops and by her licking she took enough of the milk to make her sleepy. Claire slipped her into a box that Hugh had made for her, and Willow settled down to sleep in the warm dry straw, caring nothing for the two humans who watched her.

In those first hours Willow's life was constantly in danger. Hugh Davidson's black spaniel, Mac, was frantic with jealousy. From his earliest days he had been taught that all cats were hated, despised things. He had even, on one memorable occasion, been in at the death of an old male panther. And he'd always held for himself a practical monopoly of his owners' attention.

Now this thing came. Neither cat nor panther, seeming the one from its size and behaviour and movements, the other from its scent. A combination of hated things, things to hunt and kill. Yet they were at pains to show him that this thing was sacred, something to be protected and watched over and cared for. He was scolded and cuffed away from it. He had to sit and watch while the creature was fondled and fed. Mac could not understand; and, as always when he could not understand, after trying his best to do so, he grew frantic almost to the point of

hysteria. He danced frantically on his four black, be-feathered legs. He fawned at Hugh's feet, only to scamper away to his own private corner and back again a few moments later. He ran to Willow's box and began to bite excitedly at the corners of it. Scolded, he scampered to his corner again and chewed his sacks wildly. Then he grew calmer and lay flattened in the corner, a little fur rug, black save for the whites of eyes that gleamed as he looked up in bewildered inquiry at his master.

But Willow had no fear of Mac. From the first she seemed to take to Mac as her only comfort in a hostile world. And in two days Mac had passed from tolerating Willow to adoring her. She became his pride and his care. He became her mother and her brothers, the furry, warm welcoming thing that she needed. In less than a week Willow had settled into her new life, seemed perfectly happy. She seldom uttered the little screaming call for her mother and brothers. She took her bottle gladly, though still fiercely; and she found the farmhouse a place of endless excitements and discoveries.

She seemed to fear nothing. Any noise or movement was something to be inspected, not avoided. The open fire in the living-room was warmth, warmth alive and moving, and she made endless attempts to climb the wire screen and dive down into that warmth. The movement of a human foot was something exciting and always she ran to see why it was moving, careless of the fact that such curiosity generally led to an accidental kick that sent her sprawling.

The kitchen stove was almost like a great black mother

to her. She crept under it for warmth and privacy and security, scolding and biting and scratching the hand that dragged her out. She always resented correction, failed utterly to understand its meaning. To her a blow was an attack, and against attack she was prepared to defend herself to the bitter end, with all her claws and the two or three milk teeth that were just beginning to thrust themselves through her gums.

Her refusal to accept correction was only less characteristic than her tremendous determination; the two together would have been her greatest assets in the wild life to which she had been born. In the security of Davidson's house they made her seem magnificently courageous, almost supernaturally independent. Claire Davidson wished to own Willow as completely as she owned Mac the spaniel, but she could not. When Mac was fed he accepted his food and was grateful for it; when he was taken for a walk or out hunting he was glad not to be left at home; any demonstration of affection from his master or mistress he absorbed gladly. But Willow, when a bottle of milk was held out to her, seized it fiercely and sucked its contents greedily, complaining savagely all the while; when she was too long disregarded she simply insisted that attention be paid to her; and if, when Claire tried to nurse her and stroke her and play with her, she was not feeling in the mood for such things, she simply swore and scratched and scrambled to get away.

Only Mac she loved, whether for himself or just because he was an animal, it is hard to say. She never grew weary of him. For hours they would play together; Mac

was always gentle, never excited as he was when playing with other dogs or large creatures; Willow was utterly inconsiderate at first, striking Mac with claws unsheathed, biting at him, scrambling over him, calling him back to her when he went away, screaming with rage if he dared to place a paw across her back and hold her down. But no matter how discontented her mood, she began to purr the moment she felt his silky black hair against her fur. And whenever she grew tired from such playing she began to search him for an udder, finally biting or sucking at his shoulder or his ribs or even one of his long ears until she fell asleep on top of him.

Though Willow quickly forgot to call for her mother and her brothers, she would have answered a call from another panther instantly. Sometimes it almost seemed that she was waiting and hoping for such a call. A red-shafted flicker perched one day in the willow outside the back door and stayed there a long while, screaming at intervals. Hugh Davidson found Willow sitting squarely and solidly on the back doorstep, her head cocked on one side, staring up towards the sound. Now and then she tried a little call of her own and the flicker answered. But the answer was not right. Willow was interested, but nothing more. Then Claire came to the door. Willow seemed to sense her movement; she turned her head and called to Claire. Claire ran swiftly forward and picked her up, held her tightly in her arms. Willow purred.

Davidson laughed, then saw that Claire was crying.

"What's the matter, Claire?" he asked gently.

Claire smiled, but the tears were still running down her

cheeks and her lips were trembling. "Oh, I don't know, Hugh. But it's such a poor little thing and it doesn't want me and won't let me help it."

Davidson shook his head slowly. "No," he said. "She doesn't belong here and she knows it. She doesn't belong anywhere except in the woods and whatever we do with her, wherever we put her, she'll spend the rest of her life looking and looking for a way out. I think that's why she prowls about the room so much at night, instead of lying in front of the fire with Mac."

But it almost seemed that Claire's tears had had their effect on Willow. From that day she began to settle into the strange life; she began to realize that she had a right to certain services at certain times and that to insist upon those rights she had only to remind the other occupants of the house of her presence. Her method of insisting was the only one she knew—the little, shrill, whistling call with which she would normally have summoned her mother to perform almost the same services for her. With that call she informed Claire Davidson each morning that it was time for her to be released from the imprisonment of her box; with it she demanded her bottle of milk three times each day; with it she summoned aid when an adventurous disposition led her into trouble—once when she fell down fifteen or twenty steps into the cellar, and again when she fell from the back porch into a flower-bed. Each time Claire came to the rescue, loving the worried yet imperious expression in Willow's blue eyes and cocked round ears; and with each rescue her hold upon Willow was strengthened.

For all that, Mac still remained Willow's own chosen friend and playmate. As she grew stronger and as her teeth developed she learned to play more vigorously, and yet more gently. She would strike and bite, playfully, often with her claws sheathed; sometimes she would let Mac take her whole head between his jaws, and when he lay on his back to play with her she was utterly delighted. Rarely he hurt her a little, or frightened her; then she would growl and gallop clumsily away, only to return a moment later purring as though nothing had happened.

During the fifth week of her short life Willow showed the greatest development. By this time she was about fifteen inches long from her nose to the tip of her tail. She was tawny coloured, spotted with large dark brown spots, an utterly uncatlike cat. She had a very round head with two round ears set wide apart on top of it; the ears were white inside, black outside, short and expressive. Her eyes were still slate-blue, but just beginning to show signs of the change to yellow. Her forelegs were more than twice as thick as those of the largest domestic cat, giving her a solid, powerful appearance. Her tail was long, black-barred, and pointed.

She was clumsy, and yet graceful. Her feet were clumsy—far too large for the rest of her and quite unlearned in the art of silent pacing that the full-grown panther knows so well; whether she walked or galloped her movement was a pattering, scampering sound, clearly audible from one room to another. But when she played she was graceful; her paw-strokes were smooth and well-controlled, and

the dart of her head to bite was a quick, sure movement.

In that fifth week of her life she seemed almost to have forgotten that the Davidsons' house was not where she belonged. She learned the use of a box of earth in the corner, just like any domestic kitten. She learned to lie quietly asleep on the hearth-rug with Mac, sometimes for hours at a stretch. She learned the sound of Claire's voice and to respond to her own name.

Claire was slowly attaining her desire to make Willow her own. Willow was never so happy as when she was under Claire's feet, thoroughly in the way, often unintentionally kicked or intentionally brushed aside. She learned to climb up Claire's stockings to her skirt and then, often after several falls, to her waist. If Claire picked her up she would begin to scream for milk, nuzzling and searching everywhere for the bottle; in a little while she would settle down to sucking at the sleeve of Claire's blouse or anything else that was ready to her lips; and occasionally she would fall asleep, still in Claire's arms.

Best of all she liked to be out of doors. She followed Claire happily about the farm, galloping all the way out to the chicken-house or even to the river. If Claire forgot about her and walked too fast Willow still galloped along, a little forlornly but with tremendous determination. When she lost all track of Claire she simply called and called until someone came to find her.

Strange humans she hated. When people came to the Davidsons' house she disappeared if she could—slipped under the kitchen stove or away to another room or even climbed into her box. When she was hauled out to be

displayed she hissed and spat and growled, used teeth and claws in a way that she seemed to have forgotten after her first week of captivity. And as soon as Hugh and Claire were alone again she came out from her hiding place to play and scamper and pit-pat from room to room behind Claire like a tiny, beloved shadow.

It was after a day of many visitors that Willow was content for the first time to go quietly to sleep in Claire's lap. Claire lay back in her chair happily, gently stroking Willow's fluffy, dappled fur. For a long while she seemed busy in her mind with some problem; once or twice she seemed about to ask her husband a question. At last she said:

"Hugh, what about Willow when we go to Victoria next week?"

Hugh looked up from the book he was reading and laughed.

"Of course, we could leave her at Alec's with her brothers," he said slowly, watching Claire's face all the while.

Claire sat forward in her chair quickly. She was very serious, quite ready to plead. "But we needn't, need we, Hugh? Couldn't we take her with us? If we leave her I'll lose her again and I might never get her back."

Hugh nodded. He too was perfectly serious—Willow mattered so absurdly much to both of them that they both were blind to the absurdity.

"You're perfectly right about that," he said. "You'd almost certainly lose all the ground you've gained. A long journey like that might be bad for her, but the only sen-

A L I F E

sible thing is to take the chance. There'd be no sense in keeping her if she was less yours than she is now."

III

So Willow, a panther cub between five and six weeks old, went off with her owners on a two-hundred-mile motor drive. Several times along the way the car was stopped so that she and Mac could stretch their short legs. Through most of the journey she rested quietly in Claire's lap, apparently careless of the noise of the engine and the jolting of the car, quite uninterested in the fact that, though sitting still, she was passing trees and houses and streams and mountains. She was so tiny and so young, so immediately concerned with her milk and her own especial little difficulties and troubles, that she scarcely noticed this one more strange thing in a life that was full of incomprehensible changes and novelties.

Calmly she settled into the house where the Davidsons were staying, and calmly she accepted the strange humans who admired her and tried to play with her. Only two new creatures were able thoroughly to arouse her interest, and they were two large black Labradors, a dog and a bitch named Souse and Nell. These she appropriated as determinedly as she had appropriated Mac. If they would not play with her she played with them; if they would not lie down with her she pattered across the room and lay down with them. Souse was a tall, proud, dignified, gentle dog. At first he was curious about Willow, but very quickly he decided that she was nothing particularly interesting. When she insisted on lying down beside him he

got up and moved away. When she tried to bite his long hind legs he walked out of the room and down the passage to his bed.

Nellie was more tolerant and Willow was happy enough with her own Mac and this one new creature. Mac was possessive, a little jealous of any attention Willow showed Nellie, but the three played together quite contentedly. Willow discovered suddenly that she was able to jump straight from the floor to a couch, or even to Claire's lap. From this she decided that she should be able to jump on to the arm of a chair and no amount of failures could persuade her that she was wrong. She would jump again and again, falling back with wild clawings to the floor, until at last one jump, more than half of it climb and scramble, took her to where she wanted to be.

Many strange people saw Willow in those days and she grew gradually more used to them, though Claire's was the only voice to which she would readily respond and Claire's were the feet she followed everywhere. Claire's was the lap she sought when she wanted to be fed or stroked. In the evenings she would lie quietly between Mac and Nell on the hearth-rug, tired out after a day of entertaining people who were forever inquiring of the Davidsons: "But what are you going to do with it when it grows big?" or "Aren't you afraid of it? I should be. Ugh, those claws."

Claire and Hugh were driven almost to desperation by such inquiries. The second of them was almost enough, after a few days, to reduce poor Claire to tears of anger. She said one evening:

"Why should I be afraid of her? Poor little Willow, she can't hurt anyone yet. And why should they all be so sure that she'll want to when she grows bigger?"

"Because they're fools, darling," Hugh told her. "And being fools they're probably right. We got Willow when she was so small that we'll probably be able to tame her completely—tame her so that she'll never hurt either of us or anyone who treats her sensibly. But we'll never be able to say that she won't hurt one of the fools who thinks you ought to be afraid of her."

Claire's host asked her: "But what *are* you going to do with the little beast, Claire?"

Claire shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know, Cliff. We've talked and talked about it and nothing seems right." She turned to her husband. "You tell Cliff the alternatives, Hugh. Maybe he can suggest something."

Hugh filled and lit his pipe before speaking. Then he said: "The whole thing makes quite a long argument, Cliff. Do you want it or shall we try something else?"

Cliff shook his head vigorously. "No, no. Go on, I want to hear it."

"Well," said Hugh. "If you go right back to the beginning there are three alternatives. For one, you could leave the female alive. For another you could kill her and the cubs. Or you could do as we have done, kill the female and try to raise the cubs."

Cliff nodded. "Yes. I can see that it would be hard enough to decide between those three. Go on."

"When you've got to where we are now there are really four more alternatives. You can sell the poor little

beasts to some rotten zoo that wants them. You could raise them until they begin to look dangerous, then finish them quickly with a rifle bullet. Or you could spend a little time and trouble—and probably money—and get them to a first-rate zoo like Whipsnade, where they'd have some sort of a life. Or you could take a long chance on your ability as an animal trainer and try and keep them as pets even when they're full-grown."

He paused for a moment to light his pipe again. Cliff drank from the long glass at his side. "If you assume any moral obligation, Hugh, the first alternative is ruled out."

"That's just it," replied Hugh. "If you're any sort of a man and if you're not actually in need of money to go on living you've got to assume moral responsibility. Of course, it's possible to argue that people are people and animals are animals and that if the sight of a miserable animal in an inadequate cage gives a lot of people pleasure, then the animal should be condemned to that misery and that cage." Hugh was leaning forward in his chair, emphasizing his points with his hands. "But I'm convinced that that is a false attitude. Ninety-nine per cent of the zoos in existence to-day shouldn't be allowed to have any more animals until they've started to care for those they already have."

"Granted," said Cliff. "Where does that get us? Whipsnade if you can afford it, a full-grown lion for a pet if you can't, I suppose."

"One or the other," said Hugh. "Willow's going to Whipsnade about ten months from now, I hope—if we can bear to part with her."

A L I F E

"What about your first set of alternatives, though?" Cliff asked. "How do you argue those out?"

Hugh smiled and hesitated a moment. "It's fairly hard, and you have to take this into consideration. Men kill a lot of deer. To keep a balance and protect domestic livestock they must kill a proportionate number of panthers. I'd like to say 'To blazes with all that; the panther's a better animal than the deer it kills,' but that's an idealistic argument, of no practical value as long as men slaughter deer. So the female has to be killed, if it's possible to kill her—and in this case it was so possible that if we hadn't done it someone else certainly would have. That left us two alternatives—to kill the cubs or raise them. It seems morally wrong to deny a creature life unless you know definitely that it can only have a life of misery. I think Willow has had some high spots in her little life already and she's likely to have quite a few more. So she's alive."

"Good," said Cliff. "And I think you're right. Look at her now."

Willow was lying with the two black dogs in front of the fire. Her body was stretched at full length along Mac's front legs and her head was cushioned on his neck. Her eyes were tight shut and she was breathing smoothly and contentedly, warm, comfortable, fed and without fear.

For a week longer Willow enjoyed that pleasant place. Claire bought a collar and lead for her and she learned to follow like a puppy after two or three days of stubborn resistance and determined efforts to rid herself of the collar. She learned to climb the little stunted oaks and she

walked behind Claire for quite long distances across stubble and through meadows.

She was just forty-eight days old when she showed the first sign of growing weakness. On that day she seemed suddenly thin and frail. Claire noticed once or twice that she stumbled as she ran to play with Mac, and she refused her bottle when it was still more than half full. Claire and Hugh gave her some condensed milk which she sucked eagerly from a saucer, only to be violently sick a few moments later. Towards the end of the day she grew quiet and sleepy and she turned away from Claire, away from Mac even, to search out Nellie. Some instinct seemed to warn her that only from a female animal could she expect real help and comfort. And Willow's pitiable condition seemed to rouse all the mother that was in Nellie; she fondled and licked and nuzzled the little cub, let her creep close up against her black side and lay quite still for hour after hour as she slept there. In this sudden turn to the Labrador bitch Hugh Davidson read a clear warning that her sickness was no temporary ailment.

The next morning Willow could not move away from the rug in front of the fire. She sucked a little milk from her bottle and was sick again. Her eyes seemed to have fallen back into her skull and the sockets showed china white around them.

Hugh Davidson fetched Maxwell, the vet from Victoria. Maxwell, a tall, calm, wise man, read the whole trouble as soon as he saw Willow. He stood in the doorway of the room, looking to where Willow was stretched out on the hearth-rug, and shook his head quite definitely.

A L I F E

"No," he said. "I'm afraid there's nothing I can do."

"What is it?" Hugh asked. "Why did she go so suddenly?"

"Starvation," replied Maxwell. "It happens with puppies and kittens too, if you take them away from mother's milk when they're less than a month old. They have to take so much cow's milk to get sufficient nourishment that their digestive organs wear out. If they survive they're generally pot-bellied and weak."

Hugh nodded slowly. "It would be almost a pity to save her then, wouldn't it?"

Maxwell was kneeling beside Willow. He looked up. "Yes, it would be really. And anyway there's practically no hope. But I'll try if you want me to."

Hugh frowned, then seemed to have solved a difficult problem. "Try all you can," he said. "Claire'll be heart-broken if we lose her."

Maxwell lifted Willow very gently and carried her away. She was quite unconscious, a pathetic, limp, thin little thing, almost like a paper silhouette of the creature she had been two or three days before. Maxwell was a first-class man with animals and he had diagnosed Willow's trouble correctly. He worked to line Willow's stomach with a protective, strengthening film, so that she could hold food long enough to get some good from it. For a little while she seemed to grow better, but the stomach walls were worn as thin as tissue paper. They could not recover. Just after sunset she died—a few hours less than seven weeks old.

And Claire cried again that night, not simply because

RODERICK L. HAIG-BROWN

an important part of her own life had suddenly gone, leaving a hundred little empty moments in every day; but because a living, real creature had died in Willow, a creature with an individuality, with habits and movements of her own, a viewpoint of the world that was her own.

BY
WILL JAMES



MIDNIGHT

Running mustangs had got to be an old game for me; it'd got so that instead of getting some pleasure and excitement out of seeing a wild bunch running smooth into our trap corrals I was finding myself wishing they'd break through the wings and get away.

Now that was no way for a mustang runner to feel but I figgered I just loved horses too well, and thinking it over I was kind of glad I felt that way. I seen that the money I'd get out of the sales of 'em didn't matter so much to me as the liberty I was helping take away from the slick wild studs, mares, and specially the little colts. Yessir, it was like getting blood money only worse.

I may be called chicken-hearted and all that but it's my feelings, and them same feelings come from *knowing* horses, and being with 'em steady enough so I near savvy horse language. My first light of day was split by the shape of a horse tied back of the wagon I was born in, and from then on horses was my main interest.

I'd got to be a good rider, and as I roamed the countries of the United States, Mexico, and Canada, riding for the

WILL JAMES

big cow and horse outfits of them countries I rode many a different horse in as many a different place and fix. There was times when the horse under me meant my life, specially once in Old Mexico, that once I sure can't forget, and then again, crossing the deserts I did cross, most always in strange territory and no arrows pointing as to the whereabouts of moisture, I had to depend altogether on the good horse under me whether the next water was twelve or sometimes forty-eight hours away.

With all the rambling I done which was for no reason at all only to fill the craving of a cowpuncher what always wanted to drift over that blue ridge ahead, my life was pretty well with my horse and I found as I covered the country, met different folks, and seen many towns, that the pin-eared pony under me (which ever one it was) was a powerful friend, powerful in confidence and strength. There was no suspicious question asked by him, nor "when do we eat". His rambling qualities was all mine to use as I seen fit, and I never abused it which is why I can say that I never was set afoot. Sometimes I had horses that was sort of fidgety and was told they'd leave me first chance they got whether they was hobbled or not but somehow I never was left, not even when the feed was scattered and no water for 'em to drink, and I've had a few ponies on such long cross country trails that stayed close to camp with nothing on 'em that'd hinder 'em from hitting out if they wanted to.

A horse got to mean a heap more to me than just an animal to carry me around, he got to be my friend, I went fifty-fifty with him, and even though some showed me

MIDNIGHT

fight and I treated 'em a little rough there'd come a time when we'd have an understanding and we'd agree that we was both pretty good fellers after all.

And now that things are explained some, it all may be understood why running mustangs, catching 'em, and selling 'em to any *hombre* that wanted 'em kind of got under my skin and where I live. I didn't see why I should help catch and make slaves out of them wild ones that was so free. Any and all of 'em was my friends—they was horseflesh.

The boys wasn't at all pleased when I told 'em I'd decided to leave and wanted to know why, but I kept my sentiments to myself and remarked that I'd like to go riding for a cow outfit for a change. That seemed to satisfy 'em some and when they see I was bound to go they didn't argue. We started to divvy up the amount of ponies caught so as I'd get my share, and figgered fourteen head was coming to me. There was two days' catch already in the round corral of the trap and from that little bunch we picked out them I was to get.

There was a black stud in that bunch that I couldn't help but notice—I'd kept track of him ever since he was spotted the day before. He was young and all horse, and acted like he had his full share of brains. I wondered some how he come to get caught, and then again I had to size up the trap noticing how easy a horse, even a human, could be fooled, so well we'd built it.

The big main corral took in over an acre of ground; the fine, strong woven wire fastened on the junipers and piñons wasn't at all to be seen, specially by horses going

WILL JAMES

at full speed, and the strength and height of that fence would of held a herd of stampeding buffalo.

Knowing that trap as I did, it was no wonder after all that black horse *was* caught. Nothing against his thinking ability, I thought, and as I watches him moving around wild-eyed seeming like to take a last long look at the steep hills he knowed so well I finds myself saying, "Little horse, I'm dog-gone sorry I helped catch you."

Right then I wanted that black horse, and I was sure going to get him if I could. I manoeuvres around a lot and finally decides to offer the boys any three of the wild ones that'd been turned over to me as my share in trade for the black. It took a lot of persuading, 'cause that black stud ranked way above the average, but the boys seeing that I wanted him so bad and me offering one more horse for him which made four, thought best to let me have him.

It was early the next morning when the black and the other ten horses I still had left was started away from the trap. Three of the boys was helping me keep 'em together, and as the wild ones all had to have one front foot tied up, it hindered 'em considerable to go faster than a walk, but that's what we wanted. We travelled slow and steady. The ponies tried to get away often, but always there was a rider keeping up with 'em on easy lope, and they finally seen where they had to give in and travel along the way *we* wanted 'em.

Fifteen miles or so away from the trap and going over a low summit, we got sight of small high-fenced pasture, and to one side was the corrals. There was a cabin against the aspens and as I takes in the layout I recognizes it to

MIDNIGHT

be one of the Three T's Cattle Company's cow camps.

I decided we'd gone far enough with them horses for one day, so we corraled 'em there, and the boys went back after me telling 'em the ponies was herd-broke enough so I could handle 'em the next day by my lonesome, but they was some dubious about one man being able to do all that, even if the wild ones was tired, one foot tied up, and not aching to run.

The cabin was deserted, and I was glad of it, for I wasn't wanting company right then, I wanted to think. I went to sleep thinking and dreamt I was catching wild horses by the hundreds, and selling 'em to big slough-footed "hawnyawks" what started beating 'em over the heads with clubs. I caught one big white stud and he just followed me in the trap. It all struck me as too easy to catch 'em, and the little money I was getting for 'em turned out to be a scab on my feelings compared to the price freedom was worth to them ponies.

I woke up early next morning and the memory of that dream was still with me, and when I pulled on my boots, built a fire and put on the coffee, I had visions of that black horse in the corral looking through a collar and pulling a plough in Alabama or some other such country.

I went outside, and while waiting for the coffee to come to a boil I struts out to the corral to take a look at the ponies. They're all bunched up, heads down, and ganted up, but soon as they see me they start milling, all heads up and a-snorting. I looks through the corral bars at 'em and watches 'em.

The black stud is closest to me and kinda protecting the

WILL JAMES

mares and younger stock, there's a look in his eye that kinda reminds me of a man waiting for a sentence from the judge, only the spirit is still there and mighty challenging the same as to say, "What did I do?"

A little two-year-old filly slides up alongside of him and stares at me. I can see fear in her eyes and a kinda innocent wondering as to what this was all about, this being run into a trap, roped, a foot tied up, and then drove into another place with *bars* around.

All is quiet for a spell in the corral, a meadow lark is tuning up on a fence post close by, and with the light morning breeze coming through the junipers and piñons there's a feeling for everything that lives to just sun itself, listen, and breathe in.

Then it came to me how one time I'd got so homesick for just what I was experiencing right then, the country, and everything that was in it—I'd been East to a big town and got stranded there—that I'd given my right arm just so I got back.

When I come to and looked back in the corral, the black horse was looking way over the bars to the top of a big ridge. Out there was a small bunch of mustangs enjoying their freedom for all they was worth. So far there was no chance of a collar for them, and whether it was imagination or plain facts that I could see in that black stud's face, I sure made it out that he understood all that he was seeing was *past*, the shady junipers, the mountain streams, green grass and white sage was all to be left behind, even his little bunch of mares was going to be separated from him and took to goodness knows where.

MIDNIGHT

Yessir! Thinking it all over that way sure made it hard to take. I didn't want to get sentimental, but dog-gone it I couldn't help but realize that I was the judge sentencing 'em to confinement and hard labour just for the few lousy dollars they'd bring.

Sure enough, *I* was the judge and could do as I blamed please. It struck me queer that it didn't come to me sooner.

I wasn't hesitating none as I picked up my rope and opened the gate into the corral, I worked fast as I caught each wild one, throwed him and took off the rope that was fastened from the tail to the front foot.

They was all foot-loose excepting the black. I hadn't passed judgment on him as yet, but I knowed he wasn't going to be shipped to no cotton fields, and the worst that could come his way would be to break him for my own saddle horse.

I opened the corral gate and lets the others out, watches 'em a spell then turns to watch the black. "Little horse," I says to him, "your good looks and build are against you——"

But it was sure hard to let the others go and keep him in that way, it didn't seem square and the little horse was sure worrying about his bunch leaving him all by his lonesome, in a big corral with a human, and then I thinks of all the saddle horses I already had, of all the others I could get that's been raised under fence and never knowed wild freedom.

Then my rope sings out once more, in no time his front foot is loose, the gate is open, and nothing in front of him but the high ridges of the country he knowed so well.

WILL JAMES

For the second I feel like kicking myself for letting such a horse go. He left me and the corral seemed like without touching the earth, floating out a ways then turned and stood on his tiptoes, shook his head at me, let out a long whistle the same as to say "this is sure a surprise" and away he went, right on the trail his mares had took.

My heart went up my throat for a minute, I'd never seen a prettier picture to look at than that horse when he ambled away. The sight of him didn't seem to fit in with a saddle on his back, and a heap less with a collar around his neck and following furrows instead of the mountain trails he was to run on once more.

I felt some relieved and thankful as I started back for the cabin. The coffee had boiled over while I was at the corral, and put the fire out, but I finds myself whistling and plum contented with everything in general as I gathers kindling and starts the fire once again.

It was a few days later when I rides in on one of the Three T's round-up wagons, gets a job, a good string of company ponies, and goes to work. The wagon was on a big circle and making a new camp every day towards the mustang territory.

I was trying to get used to riding for a cow outfit once more, and it was hard. I'd find myself hankering to run mustangs but then I'd see them wild ponies crowded into stock cars and my hankering would die down sudden.

One day a couple of the boys rode up to the *parada* (main herd) from circle with a very few head of stock and it set me to wondering how come their horses could be so tired in that half-a-day's ride, but I didn't have to wonder

MIDNIGHT

long, for soon as they got near me one of 'em says, "We seen him!"

"Seen who?" I asks.

"Why, that black stud Midnight. Ain't you ever heard of him?"

"I don't know," I says, but it wasn't just a few minutes till I did know.

From all I was told right then it seemed like that Midnight horse was sure a wonder. It was rumoured he was at least a half standard, but nobody was worried about that, the main thing was that he could sure run and what's more, keep it up.

"We spotted him early this morning," says one of the boys, "and soon as we did we naturally forgot all about cows. We took turns relaying on him. We had fast horses too, but we'd just as well tried to relay after a runaway locomotive."

I learned he had been caught once and broke to ride, but his mammy was a mustang, he'd been born and raised on the high pinnacles of the wild horse country, and one day when his owner thought it was safe to turn him out in a small pasture for a chance at green grass the horse just up and disappeared. The fences he had to cross to the open country never seemed to hinder him, and even though he was some three hundred miles from his home range, it was but a week or so later when some rider spotted him there again.

A two hundred dollar reward was offered for anyone that caught him. Many a good horse was tired out by different riders trying to get near him, traps was built, but

WILL JAMES

Midnight had been caught once, and the supposed-to-be-wise fox was dumb compared to that horse.

I was getting right curious about then, and finally I asks for a full description of that flying hunk of horseflesh.

I'm holding my breath some as I'm told that his weight is around eleven hundred, pure black, and perfect built, and a small brand on his neck right under his mane, a "C".

Yep! that was him, none other than that black horse I turned loose.

I started wondering how *we* caught him so easy, but a vision of that trap came to me again. It wasn't at all like the traps other mustangers of that country ever built, and that's what got Midnight. We had him thinking he was getting away from us easy, when at the same time he was running right inside the strong, invisible, net fence.

A picture of him came to my mind as he looked when I turned him loose that day now a couple of weeks past, and then I thought of the two hundred that was offered to anybody who'd run him in. That was a lot of money for a mustang, but somehow it didn't seem to be much after all, not comparing with Midnight.

It was late in the fall when I seen the black stud again. Him and his little bunch was sunning themselves on the side of a high ridge. A sarvis-berry bush was between me and them, and tying my horse to a juniper, I sneaks up towards 'em, making sure to keep out of sight. I figgered I'd be about two hundred yards from the bunch once I got near the berry bush, but when I got there and straightened up to take a peek through the branches, the wild bunch had plum evaporated off the earth. I could see for a mile

MIDNIGHT

around me but all I could tell of the whereabouts of Midnight and his mares was a light dust away around the point of the ridge.

"Pretty wise horse," I thinks, but somehow I felt relieved a lot to know he was going to make himself mighty hard to catch.

The winter that came was a tough one, the snow was deep and grass was hard to get. I was still riding for the Three T outfit and was kept mighty busy bringing whatever stock I'd find what needed feed, and as I was riding the country for such and making trails out for snowbound cattle I had a good chance to watch how the wild horses was making it.

They wasn't making it very good, and as the already long winter seemed to never want to break I noticed that the bunches was getting smaller, many of the old mares layed down never to get up, and the coyotes was getting fat.

Midnight and his bunch was nowheres to be seen, and I got kind of worried that some *hombre* wanting that two hundred dollars right bad had started out after him with grain feed horses, and the black horse being kinda weaker on account of the grass being hard to get at might've let a rope sneak upon him and draw up around his neck.

I knowed of quite a few riders that calculated to get him that winter, and I knowed that if he wasn't already caught, he'd sure been fogged a good many times.

I often wished that I'd hung on to him while I had him, and give him as much freedom as I could, just so nobody pestered him. I'd forgot that the horse already belonged to

somebody else and I'd have to give him up anyway, but that pony had got under my skin pretty deep. I just wanted to do a good turn to horseflesh in general by leaving him and all the other wild ones as they was.

Winter finally broke up and spring with warm weather had come, when as I'm riding along one day tailing up weak stock, I finds that all my worries about the black stud getting caught was for nothing.

I was in the bottom of a boggy wash helping a bellering critter up on her feet. As luck would have it my horse was hid, and as for me, only my head was sticking up above the bank, when I happened to notice the little wild bunch filing in towards me from over a low ridge. I recognized Midnight's mares by their colour and markings, but I couldn't make out that shaggy, faded, long-haired horse trailing in along behind quite a ways. He was kind of a dirty brown.

I stood there in the mud up above my ankles and plum forgot the wild-eyed cow that was so much in need of a boost to dry ground, all my interest was for spotting Midnight, and my heart went up my throat as I noticed the faded brown horse. That couldn't be Midnight, I thought, Midnight must of got caught some way and this shadow of a horse just naturally appropriated the bunch.

But as I keeps on watching 'em trail in and getting closer there's points about that shaggy pony in the rear that strikes me familiar. He looks barely able to pack his own weight, and his weight wasn't much right then for I could see his ribs mighty plain even through the long

MIDNIGHT

winter hair. All the other ponies had started to shed off some and was halfways slick, but not him.

The bunch was only a couple of ropes' length away from me as they trailed in the boggy wash to get a drink of the snow water, and I had to hug the bank to keep out of sight and stick my head in a sagebrush so as I could see without them seeing me.

Then I recognized Midnight. That poor son of a gun was sure well disguised with whatever ailed him, and when I got a good look at that head of his I thought sure a rattler had bit him. His jaws and throat was all swelled up plum to his ears, but as I studies him I seen it wasn't a snake's doings. It was distemper at its worst, and the end was as sure as if he'd been dead unless I could catch him and take care of him.

I'm out on my best horse the next morning, and making sure the corral gate was wide open and the wings to it in good shape I headed for the quickest way of locating Midnight. I had no trouble there, and run on to him and his bunch when only a couple of hours away from camp.

I thought he was weak enough so I could ride right in on him and rope him on the spot, but I was fooled mighty bad. He left me like I was standing still, and tail up he headed for the roughest country he could find, me right after him.

My horse was grain-fed, steady, strong, and in fine shape to run, but as the running kept up over washouts, mountains, and steep ridges for the big part of that day, I seen where there was less hope of ever getting within roping distance of the black.

WILL JAMES

Dog-gone that horse anyway. I was finding myself cussing and admiring him at the same time. I was afraid he'd run himself to death rather than let any rider get near him, and I thought some of letting him go, only I knowed the distemper would kill him sure, and I wanted to save him.

I made a big circle and covered a lot of territory, my horse was getting mighty tired, and as I pushed on the trail of Midnight and got to within a few miles of my camp, I branched off and let him go. I was going to get me a fresh horse.

I was on his trail again by sundown, and an hour or so later a big moon came up to help me keep track of the dust Midnight was making. That big moon was near halfway up the sky when I begins to see signs of the black horse weakening. I feels mighty sorry for the poor devil right then, and as I uncoils my rope and gets ready to dab it on him I says to him, "Midnight, old horse, I'm only trying to help you."

Then my rope sails out and snares him. He didn't fight as I drawed up my slack and stopped him, instead his head hung down near the ground and if I ever seen a picture marking the end of the trail, there was one.

It was daybreak as we finally reached the corral and sheds of my camp. In a short while I'd lanced and doctored up his throat, good as any vet. could of done, made him swallow a good stiff dose of medicine I had on hand for that purpose in case any of my ponies ever got laid up that way, and seeing he had plenty to eat and drink in case he'd want it I started towards the cabin to cook me a bite. That

MIDNIGHT

done and consumed I caught me another fresh horse and rode out for that day's work.

I'd been doctoring up on Midnight for a week without sign he ever would recuperate. He was the same as the day I brought him in and I was getting scared that he never would come out of it. Every night and morning as I'd go to give him his medicine I'd stand there and watch him for a spell. He'd got used to that and being that my visits that way meant some relief to his suffering he got to looking for me, and would nicker kinda soft as he'd get sight of me.

If I could only get him to eat the grain I'd bring there'd be a chance but he didn't seem to know what grain was, and from that I got the idea he hadn't been treated any too well that first time he was caught. I'd kept sprinkling some of that grain in the hay so as he'd get used to the taste and begin looking for it, but he wasn't eating much hay and it took quite a long time before I begin noticing that the grain I'd put in the box had been touched. From then on, he started eating it and gradually got so he'd clean up all I'd give him.

There was the beginning of a big change in the little horse after that. The powders I'd mix in the grain started to working on him, the swelling on his neck went down, his eyes showed brighter, and he begin to shed the long faded winter hair. After that it was easy, a couple of weeks more care and he was strong as ever again, all he needed was the green grass that was all over hills by then. It was time for me to turn him loose—and that's what I did.

It was near sundown when I led him out from under the

WILL JAMES

shed, through the corral where I'd let him out of once before near a year past, and on out to where he'd be free to go. I took the hackamore off his head—nothing was holding him—but this time he just stood there, his head was high and his eyes was taking in the big country around him.

He spoke plainer than a human when, after taking long appreciating breaths of the cool spring air, he sniffed at my shoulder and looked up the hills again. He wasn't wondering or caring if I understood him so long as he understood me, and that he did—he knowed I was with him for all the freedom these valleys and mountains could give him.

It was a couple of months later when one of the cowboys rode up to my camp on his way to the home ranch, stopped with me a night, and before he left the next morning dropped me some information that caused me to do a heap of thinking.

It appeared like some outfit had moved in on this range and was going to clean it out of all the wild horses that was on it. They had permits and contracts to do that and seemed like the capital to go through with it. Most of 'em was foreign *hombres* that craved for other excitements than just jazz, and getting tired of spending their old man's money all in one place had framed it up to come West and do all that *for a change*.

They was bringing along some fast thoroughbreds, and I couldn't help but wonder how long them poor spindle-legged ponies would last in these rocks and shale. They'd be as helpless as the *hombres* riding 'em. If it'd been only them high-bloods I'd just laughed and felt mighty safe for

MIDNIGHT

the wild ones, but no such luck, they was paying top wages and hiring the best mustang runners in the country.

As I heard it from that cowboy it was sure some expensive layout, there was big wagon loads of fancy grub and fancier drinks, air mattresses and pillows, tents and folding bath tubs and tables, perfume and chewing gum, etc., etc. —Yep! they was going to *rough it*.

“But I’m thinking,” says the cowboy as he left, “that with the wild horse hunters they hired, that black stud Midnight is going to find hisself in a trap once more, and somehow I’d kinda hate to see them catch that horse.”

For a few weeks that outfit was busy building traps. I seen they was going at it big as I rode through one of ’em one day, and as I talked to one of the pilgrims who I’d found busy picking wood-ticks out of his brand new angora chaps. I also seen they had big visions of cleaning this country of the mustangs along with making a potful of money.

“And it’s the greatest sport I know of,” says that *hombre* as he reaches for another wood-tick next to his ear.

“Yeh,” I says to myself as I rides away, “I’m not wishing him harm, but I hope he breaks his neck at it.”

There was in the neighbourhood of a thousand head of mustangs in that country, and it wasn’t long when the hills and white sage flats was being tore by running hoofs, a steady haze of fine dust was floating in the air and could be seen for miles around, and at night I could see signal fires. Some greenhorn had got lost or set afoot.

The hired mustang runners was having a hard time of it, one told me one day they’d of caught twice as many if

WILL JAMES

them pilgrims wasn't around. "Two of the boys was bringing in a nice bunch yesterday," he was saying. "They had 'em to within a few yards of the gate and as good as caught, when up from behind a rock jumps a pilgrim and hollers, 'That's the good boys, step on 'em!' Well, the ponies turned quicker than a flash and *they* done all the stepping, a good thirty head got away."

I was glad to hear that in a way, but I was careful not to show it, I was thinking that after all Midnight and his little bunch had a chance at their freedom, and I finds myself whistling a pretty lively tune as I rode on.

I hadn't seen Midnight only once since I turned him loose that last time, and I had a hunch that he'd changed his range on account of these mustangers keeping him on the dodge, but then again this wasn't the only outfit that was out for the wild ones. The whole country for a hundred miles around was full of riders out for the fuzztails (mustangs), and I couldn't figger out where that horse and his little bunch could go where they'd be safe.

But nobody had seen the black stud, and everybody was wanting him. I was asked often if I'd seen any sign of him, and as I'd go on a-riding the country keeping tab on the company's cattle that was on the same range as the wild ones, I was watching steady for him, but he couldn't be seen anywheres.

Come a time when it was easy to notice that the mustangs was fast disappearing. I could ride for a week at a stretch without seeing more than a few head where some months before I could of counted hundreds. I'd run acrost little colts, too young to keep up and left behind. Their

MIDNIGHT

mammies had stayed with 'em long as they could but as the riders would gain on 'em fast, fear would get the best of 'em, and the poor little devils would be left behind to shift for themselves before they was able to, and keep a-nickering and a-circling for the mammy that never came back. She'd be in the trap.

Carloads of wild ones was being shipped every month to all points of the U.S. wherever there was a market for 'em. They was sold to farmers and drug to the farm back of a wagon, the trip in the stock cars, not mentioning their experiences in the trap, took most of the heart out of 'em, and there was no fight much as the collar was slipped around their necks and hooked up alongside the gentle farm horse—a big change from the tall peaks, mountain streams near hid with quaking asp, bunch grass, and white sage.

It was late fall and the air was getting mighty crimpy when the mustang running outfits started pulling up their tent pins and moving out, the country looked mighty silent and deserted and all the black dots that could be seen at a distance wasn't mustangs no more, it was mighty safe to say that them black dots was cattle. . . .

I rides up to the pilgrim camp one day just as one of 'em is putting away his cold-cream and snake-bite outfit, and inquires how they all enjoyed the country and mustang trapping.

"Oh, the country is great, and mustang trapping is a ripping sport," I'm told, "but we lost a few thousand dollars on the deal which don't make it so good. Besides our blooded horses are ruined.

WILL JAMES

"And by the way," goes on that same *hombre*, "have you seen that black stallion they call Midnight anywheres? I see by the San Jacinto *News* that the reward on the horse is withdrawn, also the ownership, so he is free to anyone who catches him I understand."

"Yes," I says, tickled to death at the news, "but there's a catch to it and that's *catching him*."

"Free to anyone who catches him," stayed in my mind for a good many days, but where could that son-of-a-gun be? I tried to think of all the hiding spots there was, I knowed 'em all well I thought, but I also knowed that all them hiding spots had been rode into and the mustangs there had been caught. I was getting mighty worried that Midnight and his little bunch might by now be somewheres where the fences are thick and the fields are small, a couple of thousand miles away.

It's early one morning when I notices one of my saddle horses had got through the pasture fence and left. Soon I was on his trail to bring him back, and that trail led through the aspens back of my cabin and on up to a big granite ledge where it was lost on the rocky ground. Figgering on making a short cut to where I can spot that pony, I leaves my horse tied to a buckbrush and climbs over the granite ledge. When I gets up there, there's another ledge, and then another one, and by the time I gets to the top of all of 'em I'm pretty high.

I was some surprised to find a spring up there, fine clear water that run only a short ways and sunk in the ground again, but what surprised me most was the horse tracks around it. How could a horse ever get up here, I thought,

MIDNIGHT

but they was here sure enough. I noticed the feed was awful short and scarce and I wondered if it was because them horses couldn't get down as easy as they got up.

Investigating around and looking over big granite boulders I can make out horses' backs a-shining in the sun. They're feeding in their small territory, and I can tell they're feeling pretty safe, but as I moves around, a head comes up, ears pointed my way, and wild eyes a staring at me.

In that second I recognized the black stud Midnight.

There's a loud snort and whistle, and like a bunch of quail Midnight and his bunch left that spot for higher ground and where they could see all around 'em, but a man afoot was something new and not so much to run away from, and finally they stood off at a good distance and watched me.

The surprise of finding Midnight, and so close to my camp, left me able to do nothing but set where I was and do my share of watching. In a little while I started talking to him and I could see he sure remembered and recognized me. His wild look disappeared and he made a half circle as if to come my way. I wished he'd come closer, but I hadn't broke him to that. I hadn't broke him to anything, I'd only tried to give him to understand that he was safe of that freedom as long as he lived.

I knowed he understood ever since that second time I turned him loose. The proof of that was him picking his hiding place as close to my camp as he could get while the mustang runners was in the country. I know he'd been there all the last few months, and I know there was many

WILL JAMES

a time when he looked down on my cabin, which was only half a mile or so away, while I was wondering where he could be.

I seen him looking down at me that way the next morning. He was hard to see amongst the scrub mahogany, but it's a wonder I thought, why it never come to me to look up there.

Somehow or other, Midnight and his bunch got down off their hiding place. The mustang runners had all left the county, and as I rode up on the small bunch of remaining wild ones one day and watched 'em lope away toward the flat, I knowed they was safe.

I knowed they'd come back if they ever got crowded, and to that hiding place which nobody else knowed of but us 'uns.

BY
HUMFREY JORDAN



BUMBLEFOOT

Bumblefoot was an odd job elephant, not large even as Burmese elephants go, but a useful medium size and, except for his bumble leg, a likely animal. Having objected more strongly than most of his kind to the process of breaking in, he had managed, during that process, to fracture his near foreleg below the knee. Ultimately the broken bone had mended itself and the elephant had again four serviceable legs; but a decent surgeon would not have looked upon the result with pleasure. Where the fracture had been there developed an immense bony thickening, which caused the beast to walk with his knee always slightly bent and prevented him from putting the whole of his foot flat to the ground. Limping on the toes of his left fore foot, carrying below his bent knee his large unsightly lump, he had something of the gait of a club-footed man. A circumstance which, in due course, led to his acquiring the name by which he was ultimately known.

In the ordinary way the great beast would have passed from his training school into government service, or into that of one of the great companies, where routine would

have planned the long years of his working life, where he would have been inspected and tended under fixed rules, where riders who neglected him or treated him badly would have been fined or punished for their incompetence. His unsightly leg, however, barred him from this life of ease and regularity. Although, when he had recovered from his injury, he was strong and able to do a full day's work quite up to the standard of other elephants, he was blemished and much of his value gone. So a Karen, who combined elephant owning and a close attention to the possibilities of a missionary convert, bought him; and he became a general utility beast beyond the reach of inspections and careful treatment.

Of his infancy and his slow growth to maturity nothing is known to man. Of the decade and a half, from the moment when as a strange, clumsy, yard high baby he had first suckled his mother to the time when man made him a life captive, the history is only known to his companions in the herd and, in episodes and encounters, to those other inhabitants of the vast forests in which he roamed, inhabitants who sought to prey upon him or flee from him according to their size and nature. For the country where he was born and lived his years of freedom is virgin, still unknown and still unused by man, a huge area of precipitous hills and narrow valleys, of few rivers and of many streams, dry beds in the hot weather, raging torrents in the rains, a pathless land wholly covered, ridge, crest and valley, with a complete garment of great trees, tangled creepers, and the prodigality of vegetation that is a tropical forest. Men have mapped this country, have

B U M B L E F O O T

defined an imaginary line through it and called that line the frontier to Siam; there are forest officers who claim to know something of it, and traders, seeking timber and minerals, who actually do know little spaces in it; there are wild men, dacoits, outcasts who flee to it to escape from the anger of their fellows, who return from it or die in it as fate decrees; but for the most part man does not live there, there are no villages, the paths are the paths of beasts, and the life of the jungle is unknown and unrecorded. Here Bumblefoot, son of the mightiest of the jungle's inhabitants, was born, and here he learned his junglecraft. Wandering with his herd, at first carefully protected and guarded, growing very slowly, he acquired strength and knowledge and, his subsequent career forces one to assume, a reasonable degree of self-assertion. Feeding wastefully and extravagantly after the manner of his kind, his enormous ears flapping as he tore down branches, sampled them, and passed on to something new, he would be on the look-out for danger, a restless, alert, suspicious beast, expecting trouble at all times and ready, when it came, to take his assigned place in the movements of his herd. He must have witnessed many battles; taken part in several; become acquainted with violence and death. Protected from human interference by the inaccessibility of his home, he must have watched, as every-day events, sights which men will suffer much to see. The ways of the other inhabitants of the jungle were known to him. He enjoyed or suffered the seasons of the year, working hard for sustenance during the days when the burning heat of the sun penetrated almost to the depths of the interwoven

vegetation, when the small streams were dry and bathing and watering were necessities for which he must labour hard, content and probably playful when the rains brought water in abundance and the bamboos shot green and succulent. Sex would stir in him; he would experience desire, wooing, attainment; living his life in a herd he would meet rivalry and disappointment as well. Of man, a small, puny animal, but cunning, he knew nothing. Other beasts and birds and reptiles innumerable he knew, but not this creature who avoided the virgin places where he lived.

Then, wandering one day with his fellows on the outskirts of his country, he encountered the brutes, many of them. He let himself be driven to a panic by these strange creatures, harried and terrified until in a wild stampede he charged ahead without due thought, careless of the movements of his fellows, seeking escape blindly. He found great ramparts, a stockade he could neither pass nor destroy, closing him in on either side. He was still driven. He knew that elephants were ahead of him somewhere; having lost his companions he charged for the others, strangers perhaps, but of his kind. He saw an opening in the stockade, and made for it. So the jaws of the Keddah closed on him; and man took from him, for ever, his liberty and the life of his virgin home.

Of Bumblefoot in the Keddah and during the beginning of his training there is only the slenderest record. He was difficult, that is certain. Defying the placid, time ignoring habit of the land of his birth, he resorted to violence and fury. When he was tied up, fore and aft, between two trees in order that he might learn the great-

ness of man's power, and learning it have his spirit broken, he resisted the business madly and only succeeded in breaking his leg. That did him no good, but the business of persuading him to acknowledge man as his master still went on. Eventually, he yielded; grudgingly, sullenly, a limping creature much depreciated in value, he accepted defeat, and became the property of the Karen, Kyaw-myun, who purchased him for less even than he was worth. During the first season of his apprenticeship to the timber trade he was obstinate, unwilling, inclined to be vicious. But the Karen, Kyaw-myun was then young and ambitious and he had staked much capital, hardly borrowed from his relations, in the purchase of the beast. So he kept Bumblefoot to his work, determined to make something of him, since financial ruin, the finish of peace in family life, and the death of his ambitions was the alternative. He forced the beast to work right into the hot weather, when more valuable and more tractable elephants were enjoying their yearly rest. Bumblefoot objected; hauling and pushing logs up and down precipitous and tortuous jungle tracks grew more and more distasteful to him. One blazing morning he revolted. Something of the violence and fury of his first days of captivity returned to him and he did his best to kill Kyaw-myun who was riding him. Although he hurt the man, he did not succeed. Also, he paid for his moment of revolt. What Kyaw-myun did to him is not known, for the man was alone with the beast when he did it. But Bumblefoot was brought to heel. From that day on the elephant forswore revolt. He did the work men told him to do, when they told him to do it. His

HUMFREY JORDAN

tiny eyes were always sullen, he was never a happy worker, but thenceforward he answered the commands of the men who rode him. During that unknown encounter in the jungle between him and Kyaw-myun something had happened to produce in him the proper captive spirit; he was thereafter broken to his chains.

Yet Kyaw-myun did not ride the beast again. After that scene in the jungle in the hot weather, when happier elephants were resting, he demonstrated that the creature's stubborn spirit was at last broken, and he handed him over to be ridden by a relative who owed him money. Subsequently, as Kyaw-myun rose, by natural financial ability and judicious use of the mission, to a position of dignity and affluence he would often cite the case of Bumblefoot to prove to supercilious Europeans that he was a notable elephant master. Yet he never told a white man what he did to the beast, and he never rode the elephant again.

Twenty years after the incident in the jungle, Kyaw-myun was the chief lay prop of the mission in his district and had acquired a controlling interest in practically all the elephants not owned by government or the big companies. If a trader, seeking to hire an elephant, happened to be on bad terms with the missionaries, it was possible that Kyaw-myun might refuse to let him have a beast at all; if, however, under the circumstances he did let the trader have one, it was certain he would raise the price of hire considerably. On the other hand, if the trader had quarrelled with Kyaw-myun, he would have to approach the missionaries to get them to intercede for him; and then again the price of hire would go up. So, since, eventually,

B U M B L E F O O T

most of the traders quarrelled with him or with the missionaries, there was continual profit in the business for Kyaw-myun. Where the mission scored records do not say. But Kyaw-myun built himself a fine bungalow in the only town in his wide district and another up the main river nearer to the source of his affluence; and into each of them he imported certain depressing reproductions of European furniture, elaborate brass bedsteads, and an harmonium. He had long before discarded a lungi for garments more suitable to the pillar of a mission, normally arraying himself in a singlet and black alpaca trousers with a white topee on his head and violent yellow shoes on his feet; and on state occasions he covered the singlet with a brilliant blue blazer and exchanged the yellow shoes for a pair of patent leather. He was an excellent man of business and very industrious in driving hard bargains, but wisely believed in suitable recreation. At the hour of sundown, when white men were ordering drinks, and in the Buddhist monasteries dogs howled for the surplus food from the begging bowls, he would settle, with his household around him, to the harmonium and drown the noise of hungry pariahs with a nasal droning of hymns. And through all these years of increasing prosperity and expanding dignity, Bumblefoot continued to work for him, a blemished creature of no great value, thoroughly used and trained to captivity, who on account of his blemishes and his small value need not be so carefully considered as other elephants, a beast to be used for odd jobs and for long hours.

Towards the end of the twentieth working season of

HUMFREY JORDAN

his captive life, when the weather was warming up considerably, Bumblefoot finished a job of hauling parts of machinery to a tin mine in the jungle. It was a hard job, the drags were long and the country difficult. But he was kept at it at full pressure; and when he had finished it he was obviously tired, more sullen and sulky than usual; moreover he had acquired a nasty sore on his back, where his crude and ill-fitting gear had galled him. He never had very careful or skilled riders, because, being difficult and unwilling, he was unpopular, and also because it would clearly have been false economy on the part of an astute Karen to waste the best material available on a beast of, comparatively, such little value. Consequently, Bumblefoot suffered not only from overwork, but from want of proper care. Yet, when he had finished the machinery hauling he did get a day or two of rest, and wandered in partial freedom in the jungle, idling and feeding wastefully.

The machinery hauling job had been done on a contract price, calculated on the number of days a normally worked elephant would take to complete it. By cutting down Bumblefoot's daily noon time rest to a bare minimum, by driving him to the utmost while he was at work, Kyaw-myun had managed to save three days' clear hire over the normal calculation, which pleased him considerably. But, being a careful man as regards his own property, he was glad to think, when he inspected the elephant after the job was finished, that the necessities of his business might permit him to give the beast a week's rest. Seven days of idleness would enable the creature to

B U M B L E F O O T

be put on to another high pressure job without serious danger to his health, even though the weather was warming up and the season for heavy work already past. So, when he returned to his bungalow in the town of Sin Byu, to the harmonium and the hymn droning and the society of white missionaries, Kyaw-myun was not well pleased to get an urgent demand for Bumblefoot's services. But being an Oriental man of business, beside whom a Jew of Aberdeen would appear careless about a bargain, he saw much chance of profit in the demand. For it was made by two white traders, Wharton and Lathom, partners in a precarious timber enterprise, who both disliked the missionaries and were inclined to say so. Kyaw-myun, having a relative as head clerk in the partners' office, knew much about their business. He knew that they had contracted to ship a consignment of logs by a certain boat, that the logs were lying at their depot up river, adjacent to his bungalow, that unless they were hauled into the stream and rafted within ten days they could not possibly catch the boat. He also knew that to default on the contract would mean something like ruin to the partners. So, although he recognized that it would be putting a considerable strain on Bumblefoot's physique, he determined that the beast would have to do the job. But he let two days go by before he would admit that he had an elephant available.

Wharton and Lathom approached the missionaries, asking them to use their influence with Kyaw-myun. The missionaries denied having an influence in business matters, but hinted that if they had had any they would

HUMFREY JORDAN

not have used it. Kyaw-myun heard of the interview; visited the missionaries as a good convert and a staunch hymn singer frequently should; and let another day go by. Growing anxiety as to the safety of their contract would, he was aware, react favourably on the price which the partners would pay for elephant hire. Then, when he had fomented anxiety to the right pitch, he called upon the partners in their office, standing before them obsequiously, wearing his blue blazer, and his patent leather shoes, his English careful and clipt, his mongolian countenance a mask of deference; and he drove an outrageous bargain. Naturally he must have an advance payment, but being a lover of white men and a true Christian he would take no other payment until the logs were floated by the date agreed upon. If, through the fault of his elephant or its rider, all the logs were not floated in time, payment would not go beyond the advance. The amount of the final payment made the partners think hardly of missionary converts, but they clinched the bargain. Kyaw-myun was satisfied. That evening at sundown he led, with gusto, his household in the droning of "Abide with me". But he had fomented anxiety for three days. Consequently, Bumblefoot did get three days' rest when he ought to have got a week, but the delay meant that he had a forced march in front of him instead of an easy journey, and that he must, therefore, arrive tired to do a hard job against time. Yet these things must happen when the swallowing of an iniquitous charge has to be forced.

Having sealed the outrageous bargain, Wharton and

B U M B L E F O O T

Lathom took no chances. They left that afternoon, by launch, for their depot, and moved on next day at dawn into the jungle, seeking the elephant for themselves where he was reported to be. They realized that Kyaw-myun would quite probably make delays, so that in fear of failing to make the shipment they might be induced to scrap the outrageous bargain and agree to a worse.

Lathom's wife went with them, preferring the chance of a shot at something in the jungle to lonely idleness in the primitive bungalow at the depot; and it was she who named the elephant, Bumblefoot, when at last they found him.

By the time the party left the launch and set out on foot through the forest of vast trees and tangled creeper, the sun was getting high; and it took them three hours of hard going up and down the sides of steep valleys, scrambling and climbing to the accompaniment of the siren hooting of unseen gibbons, before they picked up the elephant's tracks. It was another hour before the smell of the beast and the sound of his kalouk below them in the direction of a stream assured them that the search was finished. Dripping, their thin clothes clinging to them, they lowered themselves, hanging on to creepers and to saplings, down a precipitous hillside. A hundred feet and more above their heads the leaves and branches of mighty trees shut out the sunlight, so that they scrambled in dim shade that was not cool. When they reached the bottom of the valley and heard ahead of them the splashings of a great beast bathing, they halted to recover their breath; and Mrs. Lathom, fanning herself with a large tirai, voiced her thoughts.

HUMFREY JORDAN

"At home sometimes," she declared, "I've given as much as a bob at a time to a missionary collection in church. It makes me ill to think of it now. They're a public nuisance and ought to be suppressed."

There being no opposition to or surprise at this statement, the party moved on to the stream.

In a pool amongst great boulders, flecked with patches of blinding sunlight, in a setting of extravagant beauty, the elephant was enjoying himself. With his driver perched on his neck, he had squatted in the water until only his great head and his huge flapping ears appeared above the surface. His tiny eyes blinking in content, he played with the water with his trunk and blew luxuriously. Prolonged hours of ease and enjoyment did not often come his way, and he seemed intent to make the most of a rare idleness. At the sound of the approach of white people his ears stopped flapping and his small eyes became alert and suspicious. His rider, giving no sign that the new arrivals aroused any interest in him, spat a red stream of betel-nut juice on to the beast's head and spoke to him soothingly; but the elephant ignored his speech, refusing to continue his idle amusement in face of prying strangers. Blowing and grumbling, he extracted his enormous bulk from the water, turned his back on the new comers and, presenting something of the appearance of an old man in slack, grey trousers, waddled heavily out of the pool on the farther side. There he remained facing the strangers, his unimpressive tail going like a pendulum, his ears still, his trunk feeling the air, his eyes ruminative and non-committal.

BUMBLEFOOT

And Mrs. Lathom, seeing his blemished leg, named him promptly.

"Look at his near foreleg," she demanded. "His waddle reminds me of someone. I know—of course. Why, he's like Bumblefoot Roger, the club-footed hawker and poacher at home, isn't he?"

Lathom agreed that he was; so West Country vernacular was applied, thenceforth, to an Oriental captive.

But Wharton, although he accepted the name without objection, was mostly concerned with Bumblefoot's condition. A lover of elephants, he expressed his views on the matter with vigour.

"That swine Kyaw-myun ought to be prevented from owning any elephants," he declared. "Look at that sore. Look at the poor beast's condition. If the missionaries would teach their infernal converts elementary kindness to animals instead of hymn-singing, they might go nearer to deserving the princely subscriptions you and other people are foolish enough to give them, Mrs. Lathom."

"I didn't know when I used to give my shillings," Mrs. Lathom pleaded. "I swear I'll never do it again. Lord, the old fellow is poor."

"And," Lathom reminded them, "we've got to work him all out. We can't get another, and we simply can't afford to be humane. He has got to move straight off from here and work like blazes when he gets to the depot. Poor old Bumblefoot."

"Yes," Wharton agreed, "we can't afford to let the poor beast rest. It's pretty brutal, though. My sacred aunt, I'd like to see Kyaw-myun made to pay for this."

HUMFREY JORDAN

And he called to the rider to bring Bumblefoot across the stream.

The great beast came slowly and unwillingly, foreseeing probably that his short rest was ended. He did not like the white strangers and he did not trouble to disguise the fact. As he arrived on the near bank of the stream Wharton spoke to him in Karen, but his small eyes remained suspicious and unfriendly and his ears still. As he passed Mrs. Lathom he paused, put his trunk slowly into his mouth, extracted it with extreme rapidity, and sprayed saliva over the lady.

Mrs. Lathom stepped back hurriedly out of reach of a second attack, and wiped her face with an already damp handkerchief.

"I'm afraid," she said, "his manners aren't too good. I expect he wants a bit of knowing. Anyhow, you can't expect him to love human beings. But I fancy that he has got character. Phew, he does smell!"

Bumblefoot, however, commenced his forced march without indicating that he cared whether he had well-wishers or not.

Travelling the whole way by devious paths and tracks through the jungle forest, he arrived at the depot about sundown on the third day, with four clear days ahead of him in which to complete work which normally would take a good five or more. As he was turned out for the night to feed and sleep and rest there came from across the broad, muddy river the sound of hymn tunes, droned nasally. Kyaw-myun had arrived at his bungalow to see that the outrageous bargain, or a worse, was achieved.

B U M B L E F O O T

The depot where Wharton and Lathom stored their logs after floating them from the forest, before rerafting them to the anchorage, where Bumblefoot was to do his next high-pressure job, was a bare, flat spit of muddy land, backed by the scrub jungle of old taungya, and fringed raggedly on the river side with dhani palms. In the depot yard itself there was practically no shade or shelter from the sun; and when the tide was high—for forty miles from its mouth the river was still tidal—the surface of the yard was soggy and heavy all over, while on the banks by the dhani palms it was a deep, holding morass. Heavy going all the way for log work, and from the start Bumblefoot made clear his disgust at the job.

The business of extracting logs, many of them weighing upwards of two tons, from a disorderly pile, dragging, pushing, rolling them to the bank, and shooting them into the stream, was not new work to Bumblefoot. There was nothing in the timber business, done by elephants, which, in spite of his distorted leg, he could not do as well and often as expeditiously as any of his fellows in captivity. But he disliked mud intensely, and he was fully aware that the season was too advanced for heavy work in exposed places. So he began work on the first day in a bad temper, and as he toiled in the brazen heat his sullenness and his grumbling noticeably increased. He also discovered his rider to be a fool at the particular job in hand, and he demonstrated the fact of the man's stupidity to everyone who watched him working.

Bumblefoot arrived before the sun to begin his job, but, as is the custom in the land of his birth, immediately

HUMFREY JORDAN

encountered delay. The morning mists still floated on the river and hung about the land, there was no freshness in the dawn but only a tired imitation of coolness, yet the hour was the hour of energy in that land, and Bumblefoot knew it and was ready for his work. So were Wharton and Lathom, but the raftsmen and the coolies had not arrived, and it was necessary to wait for them. The driver accepted the pause in the proceedings as usual and fitting; he dismounted, produced leaf, lime and nut from a fold in his lungi, smeared the lime paste upon the leaf, wrapped the nut in it, wedged the parcel inside his cheek, and, squatting on his haunches, permitted his mind to become blank. Wharton and Lathom, running over again the exact way in which the job must be tackled, cursed the dilatory ways of the East. And Bumblefoot, moving over to a large pile of logs, took stock of his task, ears flapping, eyes ruminative. Wharton went over and spoke to him, handling the great beast affectionately, doing what he could to arrange the hauling gear so that it should not touch the sore. His attentions were permitted without resentment but without any sign of gratitude or friendliness. Bumblefoot continued to inspect the pile of logs, acknowledging the man's attentions by an occasional light touch with his trunk, feeling, it seemed, the texture of his shorts and shirt; otherwise he ignored him. Then the sun gulped up the mist, and abruptly the burning day began. The sampans and the dug-outs of the raftsmen and the coolies, paddled without haste, showed on the broad glare of water; intense light and crude colouring filled the world; and, far away on the horizon, above the scrub jungle, hazy

B U M B L E F O O T

in the heavy atmosphere, there appeared the tree-clad foothills of that virgin country in the depths of which the elephants live in freedom.

When the sampans and the dug-outs had arrived, and the chattering mob of Burmese, Karens, Chittagonians and mongrels had begun to inform each other in mixed tongues of the nature and method of each other's tasks, Bumblefoot was already at work. When an aged Burman finely tattooed, with a coil of grey hair knotted on his head above a gargoyle countenance and a dirty red lungi rolled about his loins, who led the debate, had been persuaded by Lathom that the occasion was not one for parliamentary eloquence but was a first-class exhibition of coolie driving, Bumblefoot had already begun to lose his temper.

The way of it was this. Bumblefoot's first task was to move the logs from the large piles at the back of the depot and to arrange them along the bank where the coolies might push into the stream such of them as they could handle. He began work on the pile which he had already inspected before the sun rose. This pile was somewhat pyramidical, with a twenty-five foot log perched, insecurely, on the top, athwart the ones below it. It was obvious that this log must come off first, otherwise injury to any man or beast tampering with the base of the pile was certain. Directly the rider was mounted, without waiting for instructions, Bumblefoot commenced the ascent of the pyramid. Manœuvring his huge bulk with strange, ungainly dexterity, testing by light touches with his trunk the security of any log before he put a foot upon

it, a grey, scaly-skinned mountain of a beast, phlegmatic, intelligent, he climbed slowly but with complete assurance. When, however, he was definitely, as military persons delight in phrasing it, committed to the enterprise, the mind of his rider ceased to be entirely blank. The man spat out a red stream of betel juice and began to ply his goad with vigour, seeking to turn the beast off the pile again. With logs lying loose and easy to move at the bottom of the pile, it seemed to him an extravagant proceeding to seek the most inaccessible first. But Bumblefoot, in spite of voice and goad, was not inclined to give way to an intelligence considerably meaner than his own. It looked as though the difference of opinion might result in a heavy fall; for Bumblefoot's immediate task was not suited to an elephant made careless by temper.

But Wharton perceived the situation and interfered. He informed the rider of the magnitude of his stupidity, and he made him let the elephant have his own way. So Bumblefoot continued his cautious climb until he could feel and test the top log at which he aimed. Then finding it, as he had anticipated, easy to move, he decided, pausing deliberately before he made the decision, on the exact spot where force should be applied; placed his coiled trunk against the spot of his choice; uncoiled his trunk without obvious effort, and sent the long section of tree trunk rolling down the farther side of the pile. Without hesitating, but completely ignoring, except for grunts of discontent, his rider's attempts to aid and guide him, he sent two more logs rolling after the first. Then, backing down as deliberately and carefully as he had climbed up, he left

BUMBLEFOOT

the pile and re-inspected it, his tiny eyes winking, ruminative. He had gained his own way; and before going on with his job he put his trunk into his mouth, drew off a generous portion of saliva and sprayed his chest with it; but it was very obvious that his temper had suffered at the idiotic interference of the fool who rode him.

"Bumblefoot," said Lathom, raising his soiled pig-sticker and wiping sweat from his forehead, "seems a knowledgeable old beast, and handy in spite of his fancy leg. But I wouldn't go much on his temper."

"Do you wonder?" Wharton asked indignantly. "Would any living creature be good-tempered if he were worked to skin and bone and sores as Bumblefoot is, and, to make things worse, were ridden by an incompetent idiot? Look at the poor beast. He has been working less than three-quarters of an hour and his head is already bleeding from the goad. I wish to God we lived in the old days when I could thrash that damned rider till he screamed, and then start in on that swine, Kyaw-myun, who is really responsible."

And Lathom, before he went off across the yard to interrupt another debate between raftsmen and coolies, heartily agreed.

The dismantling of the piles of logs was work to which Bumblefoot had no great objection, so long as he was permitted to have his own way. Occasionally delaying progress by arguments with his rider, when, sometimes on account of Wharton's interference, sometimes on account of his own masterful obstinacy, he always got his own way, he made good headway and was by eleven in

the morning distinctly ahead of his work. The sun was then pitiless and the glare from the water a thing to hurt the eyes; but Bumblefoot, pausing after each effort to spray his chest, slow, deliberate, methodical, kept at his job. His temper, in spite of the insufferable heat, appeared at any rate no worse. Then, luxuriously conveyed from his bungalow across the river in the stern of a sampan, shading himself with a black cotton umbrella, as became a man of substance and a pillar of the mission, Kyawmyun arrived to inspect progress. Although he did not wear his blue blazer and although his shoes were yellow, he landed with care, almost with ceremony, at the decayed remains of what had been a tiny wooden wharf, and he deliberately avoided ploughing his way to where Wharton and Lathom practised the art of coolie driving in the morass on the bank. Standing on the rickety staging, he took careful stock of what his elephant, working across the other side of the yard, had done and was doing; and Bumblefoot paused in the act of kneeling down to a heave and stared at his owner. His ears stopped flapping; he appeared uneasy.

When Wharton left his coolie driving and climbed on to the rickety staging he was plastered with grey mud, his boots and puttees were caked with slime, and there were smears of dirt on his face through which the sweat had run channels. Thoroughly annoyed at the Karen's appearance of coolness, irritated by the obsequiousness of the fellow's greeting, aware that the primary cause of his having arrived was probably an attempt to better the bargain already made, he led the way towards Bumble-

B U M B L E F O O T

foot by the muddiest line he could find; and he was disgusted to discover that Kyaw-myun could skip from log to log like a chamois and preserve almost immaculate the sickly yellow of his shoes. So tired, dirty, his temper raw from standing long hours in the withering sunlight, he determined to tell the man what he thought of him for letting his elephant get so out of condition. But the meeting between owner and beast made him forget his intention.

As Wharton and Kyaw-myun approached, Bumblefoot was arguing with his rider over the shifting of a log. Bumblefoot's way was the quickest and easiest, the rider's the slowest and most difficult. But it struck Wharton that the elephant was not giving his customary obstinate determination to the argument; he kept on shooting quick little glances towards his approaching owner. Once, indeed, the rider, using his goad vigorously, almost got his own way. As he got near to him, Kyaw-myun spoke to the great beast sharply, in a dialect unknown to Wharton. Bumblefoot stood absolutely still, staring back at the Karen without a blink of his tiny eyes. Kyaw-myun said something to the rider, unpleasant by the tone of it, then spoke again, more sharply, to the elephant, touching him on the shoulder. Bumblefoot moved uneasily—you could almost say he shivered—hesitated, then, as the touch was repeated, knelt slowly to move the log in front of him by the slowest and most difficult way.

Wharton was still considering the incident, wondering at the cause of the surrender and the exact significance of the momentary but noticeable hesitation, when Kyaw-

myun enveloped him in a torrent of argument. A poor Karen, it appeared, an honest, hard-working man much respected by missionaries, had entered into a foolish bargain which would probably ruin him; he was confident, however, that a wealthy Englishman would not let a poor man suffer for his honesty. Wharton obeyed the rules and allowed the torrent play. When he could escape he did so. But he noticed that Bumblefoot was now no longer arguing with his rider but giving way to him.

As he walked back with Lathom to the bungalow for breakfast, he commented on the incident.

"Naturally," he concluded, "Kyaw-myun imagines that by delaying things all he can he will frighten us into agreeing to new terms. But we can get the brute out of the way by getting Henderson to send for him about those licences. He promised he would. What really interests me is Bumblefoot's behaviour. He's frightened of Kyaw-myun, terrified of the damned fellow, yet he hesitated about obeying him this morning. I wish the old beast would screw up his courage to defy the blighter."

"He has probably suffered for that too much already," Lathom suggested. "Lord, I've got a thirst! If only one could drink gallons of beer in this infernal land without suffering for it, life might be tolerable."

That night there was no hymn droning from the bungalow across the water. The kindly intervention of Henderson, the Forest Officer, had sent the owner back to the other harmonium in Sin Byu, and to make an elaborate explanation about certain irregularities connected with timber licences. This same intervention

BUMBLEFOOT

had also set the seal on a considerable alteration in Bumblefoot's destiny.

All the next day, with the exception of a short midday rest, Bumblefoot kept plugging at his job. At first he appeared expectant, slightly uneasy, inclined to let his rider have his own way; but when the hours passed and Kyaw-myun did not appear, he settled down again, ignoring the commands of the fool on his back and the pricking of the goad, and made noticeably better progress with his work. Before he finished for the day and lumbered off to the scrub jungle behind the depot for his hours of partial liberty, he had dismantled all the piles of logs and had started labouring in the morass on the bank. By voice and gesture, by grunts and curious complainings, by spasmodic ear flapping, by singular activity of tail and trunk, by the frequency with which he applied trunk to mouth and sprayed his chest, he made known the fact that he detested this abominable mud-larking. Also he began to treat his rider with almost open contumely, scorning both the fellow's voice and goad. Yet, when at the end of the day Bumblefoot dragged his quarters from the clinging mud with a prodigious sucking noise and waited sulkily on firm ground while his hauling gear was removed, Wharton used obscene language at the state of the poor beast's head. He did his best to tell the rider what he thought of him, but recognized that his acquaintance with the Karen tongue was inadequate to the occasion.

That evening at dinner in the decayed bungalow that he shared with the Lathoms he discussed the matter seriously.

HUMFREY JORDAN

"It simply maddens me," he declared. "The way we have to acquiesce in the ill-treatment and over-driving of that poor old beast is making me lose my sense of humour. I can't see anything at all funny in Kyaw-myun and his damned underlings. I wish to heaven we could buy poor old Bumblefoot and work him decently ourselves."

"Oh, couldn't we?" Mrs. Lathom demanded eagerly. "I should be in a blue funk of him; but I'd simply love to have a shot at making him friendly. With decent treatment he might come to it."

"If", said Lathom, "we manage with Bumblefoot's assistance to get this consignment of logs shipped, we might run to it. We do want an elephant of our own. And I agree with you, Wharton, this winking at sheer cruelty, because we can't afford to do anything else, is getting on my nerves. To-morrow Bumblefoot will be in the mud up to his stifle practically all day. It isn't funny."

It was not; and Bumblefoot made it plain that there was no humour in the business.

The coming of another burning day found him hard at it, and the surface of the bank already pockmarked with curious tubular holes where his legs had sunk into the stiff morass and had been withdrawn slowly and with difficulty. His job now was to manœuvre the logs end on to the stream and then to launch them, if they were small enough, straight into the water or, if they were too heavy for him to get a run on them, to slide them to a spot where the rising tide would float them as soon as possible. The coolies were of little use to him, the mud was too stiff and holding to let them drag or push the logs. All that

B U M B L E F O O T

they could do was to loosen those which had embedded themselves too firmly in the slime. They did this with a prodigality of chattering and noise. Their bronze, tattooed bodies plastered with mud, they leapt from log to log with singular lightness and accuracy, or waded in the ooze, embedding and withdrawing their slim hairless limbs with the effortless agility of snakes. Shouting, laughing, exchanging crude jests, offering each other much gratuitous and unproductive advice, they accomplished mighty little. Ponderous, massive, grotesque yet dignified, by comparison mute, Bumblefoot moved amongst them in the aching sunshine doing much solid and heavy work.

Quite early on that morning he ceased to treat his rider as anything but an irritating passenger. Consequently the work went forward at a good pace and Kyaw-myun's schemes of being able to drive a panic bargain withered. But the irritation on his shoulders was there, and the mud was there, and Bumblefoot's temper grew short. Besides, the heat was terrific and his job exhausting.

He would plough his way to a log, his shapeless legs sinking above the knees and hocks in the mud. He moved very slowly, feeling bottom with one limb before he attempted to move another. Sometimes, on a softer patch, he would sink in the morass until his great belly rested on the slime. On these occasions he would pause to collect his prodigious strength, snorting and grunting with disgust at his task, his small eyes aflame with indignation; then he would rock his vast body gently from side to side, smoothing and enlarging the bed of mud in which

HUMFREY JORDAN

he wallowed; finally he would roll on to one side, taking the weight of his enormous bulk on his ribs while he pulled his legs, one by one, free. So he would proceed testing each laborious step before he made it, leaving behind him, when he had been deeply embedded, strange tracks, his hind legs scarring the mud as though with the twin imprint of a monstrous funnel, his forelegs moulding earthen tubes, two or three feet deep.

When he had ploughed his way to a log, he would invariably observe the same routine: first he would pause to spray his chest; then he would test the mobility of the segment of tree trunk before him. His method of testing appeared cursory, and it led to many arguments with his rider. But Bumblefoot was adamant on the matter; he would employ no other method and he would abide by the result of his test. Curling the end of his trunk slightly, not coiling it as though for real work, he would gently press the log with it, first one way then the other. If his test told him that the log was too heavy for him, or that it was too firmly embedded in the mud for him to move it, he would straighten himself and await the assistance of the coolies; and no amount of driving would make him continue work on that log until assistance came. If, however, his test told him that the log was manageable without, he would get to business, manœuvring in the morass with much gurgling and loud muddy suckings. To start with, he would observe the line of its progress, then the lie of the log; if he did not like the latter, he would alter it, pushing one end or the other sideways until he had it to his liking. Then, without haste, laboriously, feeling his

BUMBLEFOOT

steps, he would move to the end away from the river and take up his stance with care. Having settled himself in position, having made certain that his hind legs had a reasonable purchase and would not slip and fail him when he brought them into play, he would coil his trunk and kneel. Firmly, not lightly and cursorily as when he employed his test, he would place his head against the log, pressing the fleshy base of the trunk, the lump that comes just below the bony forehead, against the timber. At that he would pause, making sure of his position, judging the energy required. Then he would shift his head a trifle lower, an inch or two, using his bony forehead; his body would go forward; and the muscles of his mighty flanks would tauten. The log would shoot ahead, and his trunk would uncurl, keeping pressure on the timber to the limit of his reach. After that, slowly, deliberately, he would extricate himself and prepare for another push. If, which rarely occurred, the log did not shoot ahead when he first applied his weight to it, Bumblefoot's eyes would show unmistakeable annoyance. He had misjudged his effort; but he would not misjudge it twice. To bungle his job was something that displeased him mightily, and the force which he would apply, without hurry or fluster, to a second attempt was a power to make a mountain rock.

Only breaking off from noon till three in the afternoon to feed and rest, he worked steadily, deliberately, all that day in the full glare of a pitiless sun, hampered at every step by the holding morass in which he floundered continuously throughout the long, hot hours. Yet throughout the day he never ceased to give intelligent, deliberate

HUMFREY JORDAN

attention to his work; he never once approached a log carelessly or applied anything but methodical skill to the business in hand; and, although he scarcely left the mud, he never slipped or fell. While the coolies managed, as often as not, cheerfully, noisily, to move light logs into impossible positions from which they had to be extricated with difficulty, Bumblefoot, unless so interfered with by his rider that he could not have his own way, succeeded, sulkily, complainingly, in moving heavy logs to the places where they should be. But at the end of the day his temper was very ragged, and he was obviously tired.

"We shall finish to-morrow," Lathom declared, as he and Wharton, lying on long chairs on the veranda of their bungalow, greeted the going down of the sun with whisky and tepid soda-water. "That is unless Bumblefoot crocks up or turns rusty. I shouldn't blame him if he did. That infernal mud is absolutely dangerous; if he really fell in it, I don't believe we should ever get him out."

"He won't fall," Wharton announced. "He's as good a workman as you want, and he won't take any chances. If he is very tired to-morrow, we'll leave the last three or four logs. But that blighter Kyaw-myun mustn't suspect that. If he does turn up to-morrow, he'll be hopping wild. It's no good trying to delay things now in the hope of us agreeing to a higher price for speeding them up. Too late. At a pinch we shouldn't be broke if we only shipped what is already rafted."

And the next morning, at one time, it looked as though the pinch had come. The night had been insufferably hot and airless, and the sun seemed to inflame the depot yard

B U M B L E F O O T

to midday heat before it had decently cleared the horizon of misty foothills beyond which elephants work for themselves alone. Bumblefoot showed reluctance at going into the mud at all; and although he applied his usual method and skill to his work his complaints were frequent and his surliness marked. In fact the morning started badly and went on worse.

The first incident was an affront to his dignity. He was working right on the edge of the bank, steering the logs between dhani palms. The coolies, more cheerful and more noisy than ever at the prospect of pay at the end of the day, were chattering and, when driven to it, working all about him. The aged Burman with the top-knot of grey hair, the most verbose of a wordy crowd, was haranguing the mob on the way a large log should be eased in its mud bed before Bumblefoot could move it. Squatting on his haunches on the log, just in front of the elephant he gave tongue unstintingly, well supported by an accompaniment of back chat from his audience. Bumblefoot stood above his knees in mud, lazily flapping his ears, his small eyes observing the mob about him with sulky contempt. Then a youth on the outskirts of the crowd, a youth with an Oriental sense of humour, discovered a water snake; picked it up by the tail; and hurled it at the aged Burman. Knowing the deadliness of the reptile, Wharton and Lathom were mildly astonished to find the pleasant joke received with howls of laughter, the aged Burman dodged the missile, leading the applause with cackling shrieks. But the snake, although it missed the Burman, hit Bumblefoot on the head. Water snakes

HUMFREY JORDAN

did not offend him, but having things thrown at him did. He snorted with fury and reached for the grey top-knot with his trunk. He missed, but the yells of joy which greeted the old man's agile hop to safety increased his anger. Then Wharton interfered; and Bumblefoot resumed his work, grumbling.

The second incident, which nearly resulted in a deadlock, was Lathom's fault. The coolies, left unsupervised for a few minutes, had succeeded in getting a valuable log into a difficult position between two dhani palms. To save much manœuvring on Bumblefoot's part and consequent loss of time, Lathom rigged blocks and a wire rope, and had the elephant out of the mud on to the path that ran across the yard, and made the wire rope fast to the hauling chains. Bumblefoot submitted to the arrangement with bad grace. He obviously preferred his own methods, and he had tested the log and found it movable. But when he was told to pull he pulled. Heaving into his breast harness he moved forward slowly, taking the strain without jerking. The log weighed well over two tons and it was awkwardly wedged, but as the great beast used his huge strength it began to move. Then the wire rope parted and Bumblefoot pitched forward heavily on to his head, remaining for a moment with his ungainly stern in the air. Again the coolies made things worse with yelling cackles of laughter. When Bumblefoot had righted himself he seemed almost on the verge of running amok. His trunk high in the air, he trumpeted with fury, stamping his feet, his small eyes bloodshot and wild. While his rider soothed him and his wounded dignity, Wharton and

B U M B L E F O O T

Lathom reduced the mob of coolies to silence; but, even when his first outburst of passion had passed, Bumblefoot appeared definitely to have struck work. It was twenty minutes before he could be induced to enter the mud again, and when at last he did he would for some time do nothing but tear leaves from the dhani palms and stamp them into the mire. Finally he consented to work; and when he tackled the log to which he had been elaborately harnessed with rope and blocks he moved it easily after one simple adjustment.

Lathom felt that he had justly earned the great beast's contempt.

Shortly after Bumblefoot had consented to go on with his work Kyaw-myun appeared in his sampan; and at the man's arrival the elephant again grew uneasy. He worked steadily enough, little hampered by his rider, who had almost ceased interfering with him, but he kept on looking across to his owner as though the fellow's presence disturbed him; and when Kyaw-myun came near to him and touched him he was inclined to pause in his work, keeping furtive, suspicious eyes watching the Karen.

As Wharton and Lathom had foreseen, Kyaw-myun was now intent on hurrying things to a finish. To be beaten by a log or two in a bargain which he had shaped himself was not to his liking; and he abused the rider and he abused Bumblefoot until he had them both thoroughly upset. As a consequence of the rider being upset an accident occurred about half an hour before work was due to stop for the midday rest.

Bumblefoot was working in a cramped place between

the ruinous jetty and a dhani palm. The coolies had managed to get four good logs into this space, but they had not got them far enough for the high tide to take them. The mud on the water side of the logs was impossible, even for Bumblefoot. He had tested it with careful proddings of his misshapen foreleg, and he had refused, definitely, to set foot in it. So, when he was manœuvring the logs into position for being pushed into the water, he had to pass round behind them. This entailed delay; and Kyaw-myun stood upon the crazy jetty and condemned the slowness of the work with skilfully chosen insults. Bumblefoot was squeezing his huge bulk between the dhani palm and the log nearest to it, seeking to get to the river end and adjust the alignment, when the accident happened. The stem of the palm was bristling with sharp spikes, the remnants of the leaves which he had torn off in his rage an hour or so before. As the elephant forced his way, laboriously and ponderously, past the palm the rider was careful to keep his legs away from these spikes. But a particularly skilful outburst on the part of Kyaw-myun diverted his attention just as Bumblefoot lurched heavily towards the palm in order to make the extraction of his near forefoot from the mud an easier matter. The rider did not withdraw his right leg in time and received four inches of sharp spike between the calf muscle and the bone. The wound was a nasty one, and it put the man out of action. So Bumblefoot was brought out of the mud on to the path and allowed to stand idle, surveying with ruminative eye the dressing of the rider's leg and the gesticulating oratory of Kyaw-myun. Flapping

his ears, except when Kyaw-myun passed near him, he appeared thoughtful at the course of events.

But Kyaw-myun was rampant, clasping his hands in supplication, almost tearful. Six logs remained to be moved. Now that his only rider was desperately wounded and unable to continue work, the partners could not be so inhuman as to insist on the fulfilment of the bargain.

Wharton and Lathom smiled. It was their hour. But the sun was burning into them and they did not intend to let the harangue run its course.

"You made the bargain," Wharton informed Kyaw-myun, as he finished a rough dressing of the rider's leg. "Stick to it. We are not going to argue. Understand?"

Kyaw-myun understood; but he merely altered his line of argument. He passed from the subject of his own ruin and the starvation of the widow and children of the rider, who was certainly going, he declared, to die, to the matter of a compromise on the price arranged. Lathom stopped him.

"It's not the least good going on talking," he said. "Either those six logs are floated or you don't get paid. We shall be back here at three o'clock to start work again. Two hours will see the job finished. Finish it, if you want your money. I've heard you talk a lot about your skill with elephants. You fancied yourself as a sin-ok once, didn't you. Well, ride the beast yourself."

As Wharton and Lathom made arrangements for the rider to be removed to the servants' quarters at the bungalow and then prepared to go off to breakfast, Kyaw-myun followed them about with clasped hands,

HUMFREY JORDAN

murmuring pitcously: "Mr. Wharton! Mr. Lathom! Sir! Sir!" Yet, when he perceived that the histrionic effort was wasted, he altered his tune and touched a veiled insolence.

"Gentlemen," he declared, "I will do it. And you will pay me in cash to-night. Cash. I am a poor man. I cannot wait."

Bowing, he went over to Bumblefoot and ordered the beast to kneel so that he might mount him. For a moment Bumblefoot appeared unwilling to obey; then Kyaw-myun spoke to him again, sharply, touching him; and he knelt, fear and uneasiness awake in his small eyes.

With Kyaw-myun perched on his neck he lumbered slowly off towards the scrub jungle for food and rest; and Wharton, filling a pipe, watched him go.

"This ought to be a useful lesson to Kyaw-myun," he announced. "The blighter didn't relish the prospect of a job of work at all. I thought that he was going to refuse to ride."

"So did I," Lathom answered. "It wouldn't have mattered much if he had. Of course, we should have had to pay the brute for what he has done. Bad policy not to. As a matter of fact, we have got the full contract floated now, but the buyers will take any surplus we can send them. My missis would have been disappointed, though, if we had not gone on. She wants to photograph Bumblefoot at work this afternoon. Which reminds me, she's got to wear puttees. The place is crawling with water snakes. I've seen four this morning, besides the one that humorist threw."

B U M B L E F O O T

"Specialized form of humour that," Wharton laughed. "They say that death from their bite is practically instantaneous."

And wearily, for the heat was great and they had stood in the sun for many hours, they went off to breakfast.

Punctually at three o'clock Bumblefoot, ridden by Kyaw-myun, reappeared and began work. He seemed less sullen than usual, but more thoughtful as he began to work on two outlying logs. The first of these he moved and launched into the water almost in record time. Kyaw-myun rode him hard, commanding and exacting obedience with apparently unnecessary determination. There were two possible ways to move the second log, neither of them at the first glance seeming obviously the better. Bumblefoot began to manoeuvre in the mud to move it one way. Kyaw-myun promptly drove him to move it the other; then, while he was forcing the elephant to change his position, he perceived that his way would involve one extra movement, so he gave up the attempt and let the great beast have his own way. Bumblefoot appeared at first astonished, then even more thoughtful. After launching this log successfully, he sprayed himself with extreme deliberation; his natural sulkiness seemed to have given place to an almost dreamy pensiveness.

Mrs. Lathom photographed him as he ploughed his way, with the mud sucking at his cumbrous limbs, across the morass to the four remaining logs between the jetty and the dhani palm, where the accident had happened in the morning.

"Poor old beast," she said, seating herself on a coil of wire rope on the jetty. "He must be absolutely beat. That fool Kyaw-myun is even worse with the goad than the other man was. What's the sense of it? Bumblefoot is doing his best."

The heat was stupefying. To the three Europeans on the jetty the sun brought a lethargy that made the scene before them sway and rock unless they fought against it. To glance across the glare of water was like a blow in the eye. Shade and freshness seemed gone from the world. Yet Bumblefoot, obviously tired and out of condition, had given up complaining. He toiled in the mud silently, his sulkiness no longer apparent, his tiny eyes thoughtful and bright.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Lathom, "the poor old devil knows that he has only four more logs to shift. The prospect of a rest has softened him."

But she was wrong in that.

The morass about the four remaining logs was softer and more holding than it had been in the morning, for the tide was rising. Twice, in reaching the log by the dhani palm, Bumblefoot sank up to his stifle and had to sway and rock his great body about until he could free his legs. Yet, although the strain upon him was tremendous, he never really looked like falling or losing control of himself. But it was evident that Kyaw-myun did not like the job, and he hung on nervously when the great beast rolled and plunged. He appeared chiefly occupied in keeping his seat; and he certainly did not attempt to interfere with the elephant's way of tackling the log.

B U M B L E F O O T

Working very deliberately, testing the mud and the log before he moved, Bumblefoot again squeezed himself past the palm, and then backed out when he had made the necessary adjustment. To the three white people watching from the jetty it seemed that Kyaw-myun was mainly concerned with the safety of his own legs, but that Bumblefoot deliberately paused once or twice in his work to see whether the man on his back would object to the hesitation and restart driving him. When Kyaw-myun did nothing but look after his own limbs, the elephant became still more thoughtful.

Having calculated the effort required with nice exactness, Bumblefoot sent the log on which he was working sliding into the water, and lumbered heavily to the one next to the jetty. Spraying himself, he inspected this log with extreme care. Then he tested it lightly with his trunk, and paused. The forward end of the log was against a snag in the mud, which prevented it from being pushed into the water. Kyaw-myun, however, made no attempt to interfere, he left the job to the beast. Bumblefoot assured himself of this by hesitating twice before he tackled the business.

To the onlookers it appeared evident that he was giving peculiarly careful attention to the exact way in which the work should be done. The mud in this particular spot was certainly bad, but they wondered why the beast, who had hitherto shown no signs of falling, who usually made up his mind after the first test, should be so extremely careful. Interested, almost forgetting the withering heat in admiring the slow working of a deliber-

ate intelligence, they stood in the blazing sun and watched.

While Mrs. Lathom got ready her camera, Bumblefoot made up his mind. Picking his steps cautiously, he struggled into the narrow space between the log and the jetty. The log was on his right, the jetty on his left; he faced the river. There was no room for him to turn broadside on, but by slewing himself to the right he could get sufficient purchase on the log to roll it from its mud bed clear of the snag which obstructed its slide into the water. It was certainly the only way to do the job, and as Bumblefoot, his tiny eyes bright and alert, began to work his previous hesitation seemed the more difficult to understand.

He took up his position with fastidious care, taking some time to settle his legs in the mud, making quite certain that when he got down to it his head would be in the right position to roll the log aside. But, making a final settlement of his forelegs, he did the thing which he had not done before in four long days of forced toil. He slipped. His near foreleg, apparently, lost its hold, and the weight of him rolled towards the jetty. Kyaw-myun, fearful of a crushed limb as the great beast fell against the timber staging, whipped his left leg over the elephant's neck, sitting right over on the off side. As he did so Bumblefoot recovered himself with amazing agility. Rolling right over the other way, he got his head against the log and his great flanks into action in one calculated effort of prodigious strength. The unexpected movement was too much for Kyaw-myun. As the log rolled out of

B U M B L E F O O T

its mud bed he lost his seat; he slid off the great animal's neck and fell sprawling in the smooth mud furrow where the log had rested.

The full weight of the timber was still against Bumblefoot's head. As his owner sprawled beside him he began slowly, deliberately to lower the huge mass of wood back again upon the man. He worked methodically, without rage, inexorably, intent on making the burial secure. As Kyaw-myun realized what was happening he made a prodigious effort to slip out of the grave before the log pressed him into the mud. Then he suddenly ceased to struggle, screaming aloud instead; and there was a wriggling in the mud beside him. Bumblefoot stared; stopped the timber moving; braced himself and, with ease and skill, rolled the log where it ought to be for launching into the stream.

He then moved laboriously from the grave which was no longer required and, flapping his ears contentedly, sprayed himself. But Kyaw-myun was silent, already contorted. The water snakes had completed in their way the job which Bumblefoot had planned differently.

That night Henderson, the Forest Officer, passing it on tour, dined and slept at the bungalow. He was a dapper little man, inclined to pomposity and the opinions of his forefathers. As he lay on a long chair on the veranda after dinner, neatly dabbing at his damp forehead with a large silk handkerchief, he pronounced a species of considered judgment on Bumblefoot's achievement.

HUMFREY JORDAN

"You haven't the least doubt," he asked, "that the elephant deliberately planned squashing the man with the log."

"Not the smallest doubt," Lathom assured him.

"And you are actually going to buy the beast," Henderson continued.

"We are, actually," Wharton answered.

"Well," Henderson declared, sitting up in order to give additional impressiveness to his pronouncement, "I will not say that you will have this sort of trouble with him again. My experience of elephants makes me regard this incident as in the nature of the settlement of a private feud between a particular beast and a particular individual. But"—he looked sternly at his audience—"but it is the principle I am trying to consider. Is not some species of disciplinary action required? After all, we must consider the sanctity of human life."

Mrs. Lathom laughed softly. She was standing by the balustrade of the veranda, looking out into the night.

"Mr. Henderson," she invited, "before you help yourself to a drink do come here a minute."

There was no breath of wind to stir a leaf. The heat was intense; from every direction there came the continuous loud noise of insects; a tucktoo spoke in the compound. From across the river, where Kyaw-myun's bungalow stood, there sounded singing and playing, but not the singing of hymns or the playing of the harmonium. The missionaries were many miles away and Kyaw-myun's relatives were taking no chances with the spirits. A full moon rode high in the sky, gleaming on the broad

BUMBLEFOOT

waters of the river, lighting the jungle with a soft clear radiance.

Henderson stood beside Mrs. Lathom and looked out over a wide scene of extravagant beauty.

"Why", his hostess asked him, "should Bumblefoot be punished because he doesn't consider the sanctity of human life?"

"Come now, Mrs. Lathom," Henderson argued, "you cannot pretend that we must not regard life as something sacred."

"Life!" Mrs. Lathom interrupted him, and laughed again.

Then she pointed into the distance to where the foothills of the virgin jungle were outlined against the sky in gleaming silver and in purple shadow.

"Surely you are getting the proportions mixed," she continued. "They took Bumblefoot from there, against his will, and condemned him to labour here for the rest of his days. Why should he consider human life?"

"Put that way, of course," Henderson admitted, "I don't quite know. But——"

"I love life," Mrs. Lathom insisted. "I certainly hope I shan't have to give it up till I'm too old to enjoy it any longer. But I think I admire Bumblefoot. And I'm sure that he is perfectly justified in feeling content with a good day's work. I hope he is content. Listen to him."

From the scrub jungle, through the hot still air, across the soft, clear beauty of the moonlight, there sounded the clapping of a kalouk. After exacting labours, Bumblefoot was feeding quietly.

BY
CHERRY KEARTON

★

THE INQUISITIVE MONGOOSE

It takes two to make a friendship, just as much as a quarrel; and this is true of friendships between men and animals as well as of those between human beings. If you take the trouble to understand an animal, you will find that you are not only learning natural history, but you are also achieving a wider understanding and a better state of feeling towards life in general; for is not understanding and love of *all* your fellow-creatures the basis of Christianity, of ethics, of all that makes life worth while? "Go to the ant . . ." There is a great deal that animals can teach you.

There is no better friend than a dog, and most homes are made more homely by the presence of a cat. But why should one's relations with animals stop there? If your surroundings—and your neighbours!—permit, keep a baby bear, a chimpanzee, a small monkey, or a squirrel.

The number of such animals kept in English gardens is daily increasing, although many people who have no proper reason for such an idea still imagine that the keep-

THE INQUISITIVE MONGOOSE

ing of a pet of that kind would involve far too much trouble.

Well, if you want to keep and study an interesting wild animal, and yet run no real risk of being overwhelmed with trouble and work, keep a mongoose. There are few creatures that make such good companions and yet are so easy to keep, for the mongoose has few fads in the matter of food (and indeed could support himself if necessary on what he would find in an average garden), is not too particular where he sleeps, and is very easily made happy, provided that he has a fair amount of ground to run about in. And once you have shown that you mean well by him, he will soon settle down as one of your family.

The mongoose that I kept for some years I originally called "Parker", because of his unbridled curiosity. He always wanted to explore, and as my garden was full of bushes and boulders, little valleys and trees, he had plenty of scope for his hobby. But we didn't always call him Parker, because when we felt particularly affectionate towards him (as indeed we often did) that, being a surname, seemed a trifle formal; and then we added a Christian name and called him Robin. Most of our animals have more than one name: Tommy, the fox-terrier, has two others in fairly general use.

When Robin first arrived, we put him down in the large studio which stands by itself just in front of the house, and which was the home of Mary the chimpanzee, Tommy, and, from time to time, various other animals. In one corner of the studio was standing a heavy pile of

CHERRY KEARTON

wooden poles and planks; and the mongoose, being rather uncertain for the moment of his new surroundings, at once ran there for shelter.

He was very shy and rather frightened, and although at first I could see his little nose and his beady eyes in the space between two of the poles, he retreated as I approached, and finally he appeared to decide that it was safest to stay in his second line of defence, somewhere right at the back of the wood-stack. I called to him, clicked my fingers enticingly, and at last set down a tempting plate of food. But nothing would induce him to come into the open.

To have pulled down the stack of planks would have been a good deal more than one man's work, and eventually, after a day of ineffectual efforts, I had to leave him. But before I went I placed a meal a foot beyond the foremost plank. I was hopeful that he would get over his shyness in the night, so that I might find him playing in the studio when I returned.

But in the morning, although the plate was empty, there was still no sign of the shy mongoose.

He did not appear all that day, and when, the next morning, I again found an empty plate, I began to wonder whether the food I had so carefully prepared was nourishing only the rats and mice, while the mongoose had crept away through some hole under the wall and then had escaped through the garden into open country.

However, on the fourth morning I got to the studio rather earlier than usual, and to my delight I surprised the mongoose in the act of clearing the last crumb of his

THE INQUISITIVE MONGOOSE

breakfast. I stopped at once, so as not to startle or frighten him, and as he was at heart a very friendly little fellow, he did not run away but stood quietly watching me.

That moment, I knew, would be the turning-point between friendship and continued shyness. If he was convinced that he had nothing to fear, we should get on well together. So, resisting the temptation to go closer, I sat down on the floor and returned his stare.

After a while I began to make little friendly noises and to scratch on the floor with my finger-nail. He did not seem disturbed. Indeed, after ten minutes he looked down at his plate, noticed a spot on it that was not licked clean and, in front of me, set to work on it.

Then I knew that he had accepted me, and was prepared to make friends.

To cement the bond I took from my pocket my pipe, which I had been in the act of filling when I entered the studio, and put it on the ground in front of me. He looked at it and up at me. Then his curiosity got the better of him, and, creeping up to the pipe, he began to pull the tobacco out of the bowl.

Robin never could resist the temptation to empty things. Once he found the gardener's coat; in a very few minutes he had pulled everything out of the pockets and all the tobacco out of the pouch. Curiosity was always his weakness and, as I shall shortly relate, it led him into a great deal of trouble, although it certainly also brought him much enjoyment.

He won his name "Parker" directly he left the studio. As soon as we felt that he had grasped that my wife and

CHERRY KEARTON

I were his friends, and that he had come to a new and not objectionable home, we opened the door of the studio and let him run out to see the delights of the garden. He ran to the doorway, stopped and looked out. Quite a lot of exciting things were within his view: a thrilling bed of Michaelmas daisies, a heap of stones where slugs would lurk for a certainty, and in the distance another flower-bed and a stretch of lawn—just the place for a rat-hunt. So off he went on what was no doubt intended as a voyage of exploration, although it wasn't that for long. Exploring the distance could wait: there was so much to do near at hand.

The very first stone attracted his attention, and he walked all round it, sniffing excitedly. Then he put his little paw into a crevice and drew out a slug.

That early success, of course, put an end for that day to the craze for exploring: what mongoose would trouble about exploration when there were obvious chances of successful hunting? He had just finished a very good dinner, but that didn't matter. It was the chase he loved, and off he went to the daisies, alert for possible rats or mice.

Fond as he was of putting his little nose into places where it had no business to go, there was nothing that ever appealed to him so much as hunting. However much food I might provide, he always preferred what he had caught. Slugs were his principal quarry, but he hunted rats and mice whenever he got a chance and he was extremely partial to frogs—or rather to the heads of frogs.

THE INQUISITIVE MONGOOSE

Rats and mice didn't often escape when he started on their trail; but he was beaten every time when he stalked a water-rat. There were many of these, living in the banks of the lake, and they would often sit on the bank to nibble at blades of grass, see Robin in the distance and be seen by him, and then turn and dive for home.

I could almost hear Robin saying then: "Ah ha! A rat!" and off he would go, full of confidence every time, at top speed; and then the rat, which he had thought to be like any other rat, an easy victim, would disappear into the lake, leaving Robin unable to follow, absolutely dumbfounded, and not a little annoyed. This sort of thing would happen two or three times every week, but after a year of it Robin was just as much surprised and just as much put out as he was the first time. "Hang it all," he seemed to be saying, "a rat is a rat, and it ought to behave like one!"

Sometimes he would try to catch butterflies—another difficult prey, though not so impossible as the water-rats. That was usually in the sloping field adjoining my garden where the grass grew long enough to cover his body. The grass rather confused him, for he couldn't see where he was going, and every few feet he had to make a little jump into the air for a hasty look forward before he came to ground again. Then, having seen a butterfly hovering some yards in front, he would creep in that direction till he thought he was near enough for a spring, when up he went, striking out at where he imagined the butterfly would be with his paw, in the rather fruitless hope of crippling it. Of course, the butterfly by that time had

CHERRY KEARTON

generally moved on to a tempting poppy some yards distant; but even if it hadn't, its chances of escaping from Robin's blind jump and thrust would have been considerable—and of that I was glad, for though as a gardener I rejoiced in the successful onslaught on slugs, I could not so happily spare the butterflies, which make the country joyous.

Strange to say, the sparrows never interested Robin. He would lie down on the wooden veranda, where the sparrows and a tame robin came to feed, and he would snooze quietly within six feet of them. Nor did he bother about the moorhens, who used to swim to the bank and cluck at him cheekily, as if daring him to come and see if they were not even more difficult to catch than water-rats. He was not with me in the days of Mr. Penguin, and perhaps that was as well, for he had the freedom of the garden, and it would have been impossible to stop him from raiding Mr. Penguin's apartment if he had wanted to do so.

His lack of interest in the sparrows and his namesake the robin always surprised me, for the mongoose in his wild state lives partly on small birds as well as on snakes, mice and rats. Perhaps he thought them too easy a prey to be worth bothering about; or perhaps he couldn't bring himself to take advantage of their innocence, and so destroy their faith in him.

Fortunately, too, he did not raid the chicken-runs of my neighbours. Once he was accused of this, but it was so much against his general habits that I daringly put him into the run with three chickens to prove my point;

THE INQUISITIVE MONGOOSE

and he bore me out by leaving them to their own devices while he paid attention to a rat-hole. And yet, of all the delicacies which we gave him and which he found for himself, there was nothing that pleased him so much as the raw neck-bones of a chicken!

Robin's daily round, of course, was by no means all work and hunting. On getting up in the morning, my first duty was to go across the garden to the studio to take breakfast to Mary the chimpanzee. She was ready enough for it, and so was Tommy the terrier for his, and for the run that followed; but Robin was never in any hurry, because this was one of the times when he was allowed to share in our family life.

As soon as I opened the studio door, he would give my hand a little sniff by way of greeting and then run out, across the lawn, up the steps to the veranda, into the house (I used to leave the door open specially for him), up the stairs and into the bedroom. There, like a child greeting his mother in the morning, he would climb into my wife's bed and snuggle under the bedclothes.

There he would stay, very warm and comfortable and happy, till I returned. Then I would say: "Now then, Robin, come along," and turn him out.

Every morning, when this happened, he would sit up on the bed and swear at me; and then he would go obediently down to the dining-room. Half an hour later we would find him there, sitting before the fire in the winter or under the grand piano in summer, and he would look up at me and seem to be saying: "Oh, yes, you can turn me out of the bed because you are bigger than I am;

CHERRY KEARTON

but I don't care. I've found a much better place down here."

Robin loved to sit in front of the fire in winter, especially when he had got wet in the rain outside. Then he would come in and take the central position on the hearth-rug, sitting upright with his two little paws outstretched sideways, till the front of him was dry and comfortable, and then turning round in the same attitude to dry his back, propping himself up with his long bushy tail.

Coming as he did from Africa, he very much appreciated warmth, and when he was cold and there wasn't a fire he would nose his way under an old coat or a rug. But of all nestling places, the one he preferred was inside my wife's coat while she was wearing it. He would climb in at the front and work his way round till he could lie across the small of her back, with his head on one hip and his hind toes on the other, and his long tail somewhere in front.

His tail was normally long and narrow; but when he became excited, hunting or playing, it would spread out till it was about four inches in diameter.

When we sat down to breakfast he would climb on to my knee. We would give him a saucer of milk or a bowl of bread-and-milk, sometimes an egg—he preferred them raw—and on very special occasions the chicken-neck which I have already mentioned. He was good at breakfast-time, as a rule, and also when, together with Mary, he would join us at tea; but when his appetite got the better of his manners, his sin was usually stealing other people's eggs or helping himself to butter. Often

THE INQUISITIVE MONGOOSE

he would sit so quietly that we almost forgot he was present; and then, if no one seemed to be looking, a little arm would come tentatively forward towards the butter dish, and, if still no notice was taken, a greasy paw would go up, a minute later, to be licked. (Of course, this was very, very wrong; but on more than one occasion my wife caught my eye, signalled what was happening, and then, by mutual agreement, we fussed over coffee-pots and bacon dishes till the crime was finished and the traces of it properly cleared away.)

After breakfast Robin would want a game. Sometimes it would be hide-and-seek, either in the house or in the garden: he would run to the flower-beds and hide behind a clump of Michaelmas daisies, peeping out from time to time to make sure that we were coming to look for him. Then, when we got near, he would wait till the thrill became unbearable, and at last spring away to the next clump and wait for us to follow.

He loved, too, to be tickled, lying on his back like a cat, with paws in the air, and enjoying himself to the full. Often he wanted games when no one was free to play with him. There was a great deal of work for us to do in the garden, the house and the studio, apart from my ordinary tasks, and sometimes it wasn't possible to pay Robin all the attention he desired. Then he would become insistent. If my wife was tying up the chrysanthemums, he would suddenly appear beside her, make a funny little grunting noise, run round the bush, jump into the air and try to strike her arm: then he would stand back and look up, as much as to say: "Come on,

CHERRY KEARTON

it's your turn now," and run round the bush again, looking back to see if she were following him.

It was tempting, of course, to leave one's work on those occasions, and sometimes we did; but not always. When we were obdurate Robin would run away, and a little later we would find him playing with Mary.

He was very fond of Mary. A native in East Africa, as I have related, couldn't understand the games of Chuey and Toto. I, in my turn, was surprised at the extraordinary affection between a mongoose, a chimpanzee and an English fox-terrier in my garden. Yet there it was. Those three played together, exactly like children, except when Mary took the role of mother, which she did when Robin showed that he was feeling particularly lonesome. Then she would pick him up in her arms, hold him very nearly in the way that a mother holds a baby, and pet him till, nestling in the warmth of her fur, he was happy again.

Then, at last, he would wriggle out of her arms and run off: and Mary would watch him affectionately, getting more and more interested, until at last she couldn't stand being a mother any longer and would run and join him like a child again.

When Robin first came to me, before the days of Tommy, I used to have an old sheep-dog, and it was with him that Robin first learnt to play. A little later, when the sheep-dog was replaced by Tommy, then very puppyish and energetic, the games became friskier. Mary would discover an old rag and run off with it, then Tommy would catch the trailing end of the rag, and the stage would be

THE INQUISITIVE MONGOOSE

set for a grand tug-of-war. Or else Robin and Tommy would start a playful fight, and Mary would come into the middle of it and grapple either or both of the others, catching an arm or a leg or a tail or a head, whatever was nearest, so that the duel turned into a general scrimmage.

One day when the three animals were playing in the garden, Tommy wandered off by himself, nosing about the flower-bed until by chance he discovered a wasps' nest in the ground. Of course, the sight of the wasps constantly going in and out attracted the dog's attention, with the result that his nose went too close and got stung. His yelps attracted Mary's attention, and she came running across the lawn to see what was the matter. Tommy looked up for a moment from rubbing his nose to tell her, and then she couldn't resist trying to prove his tale. The proof was forthcoming, in the shape of a sting on the end of her finger, and Mary joined Tommy in the search for cooling grass.

Meanwhile, Robin was left alone, deserted by both his playmates, and, of course, he very soon guessed that there was something worth inquiring about. He in his turn appeared on the scene, learnt the sad story, and, undismayed but full of curiosity, went to have a look for himself, and started scratching to make the hole bigger.

This third attack was a little too much for the wasps and they (I suppose) sounded the alarm, with the result that a whole army came out of the nest. By all the laws of justice Tommy, as the originator of the raid, ought to have borne the brunt of the attack; but by this time

CHERRY KEARTON

he had retired to a safe place by the bank of the lake. Failing him, Mary, as the second attacker, perhaps deserved punishment; but she had gone back to the studio to work, with the aid of an old hairpin, on what she apparently thought was a splinter in her finger. Consequently the comparatively innocent Robin was left alone on the field of battle, and the sortie took full advantage of his lack of support. The wasps settled down on to his ears and head and gave him punishment.

Poor Robin, heavily outnumbered as he was, made no serious attempt at a fight but quickly beat a retreat across the lawn, running on his hind legs while he tried to fight a desperate rear-guard action with his little front paws.

Alas! It was three saddened little animals that I put to bed that night!

But this sort of incident was soon forgotten, and its lessons were never learnt. It couldn't cure Robin of his fatal curiosity, and anything new had always to be explored. Coat-sleeves, for instance, always attracted him and, wondering what could be at the farther end of those long dark tunnels, he would set to work to find out. If the sleeve were big enough, he would crawl half-way up it, and then, losing his nerve, he would try the safer method of pushing up one of his little arms.

Another thing that absolutely fascinated him was the ink-pot. He soon learnt its mysteries and discovered that this curious dark water, though not good to drink, was excellent for making pretty patterns on carpets. If no one was about, he would clamber first on to a chair, up

THE INQUISITIVE MONGOOSE

to the writing-desk, then push the lid off the ink-well, and dip in his paw.

After this had happened three or four times we made a rule of always leaving a nice white sheet of paper invitingly on the desk, in the hope of saving the carpet; and sometimes the ruse succeeded, with the result that we would come in half an hour later to find Robin, like a small child with a new and messy game, entirely absorbed in making his paw-prints.

Once I received an urgent request on the telephone to come and remove Robin from a neighbouring house. The message clearly implied that this was a matter of life and death, but whether for Robin or for my neighbour I did not know till I arrived and was greeted by an indignant gentleman who had spent a hectic morning over financial calculations (I should think from his fury that they must have been connected with an income tax return), and then after leaving the room for dinner had returned to find his careful work entirely obliterated by Robin's inky fingerprints!

That was the direful result of one of Robin's expeditions outside the garden fence. He often trespassed abroad, and as he grew older he went farther and farther afield, until it grew to be a not infrequent thing for him to stay away from home for two or three nights at a time. At first this caused us a great deal of uneasiness, and once or twice we even sat up for him till the early hours of the morning. But after a while we decided that he was able to take care of himself, although in that subsequent events proved us to be wrong.

CHERRY KEARTON

The trouble was that the mongoose, creeping along in the dusk, was more than once mistaken for a fox, the sworn enemy of farmers in my part of the country as in all others. Robin had several hair-raising adventures through this mistake, and one in particular.

He had gone out by himself one day on a rat-hunt, and our last view of him was when he was jumping in the long grass of an adjacent field, in his efforts to see something worth chasing.

Neither that night nor the next morning did he return, and then the baker casually informed us that a fox had been seen half a mile away in the early hours of the morning, and that, as foxes had been particularly mischievous in the local chicken runs for some time past, an S.O.S. had been circulated, with the result that some forty men and boys had turned out in pursuit.

We wondered at the time whether the "fox" could possibly be Robin, and felt a certain amount of anxiety. However, the hunt was unsuccessful, and the next news that reached us was that a small but mysterious animal, believed to bear some resemblance to our mongoose, was at bay under the shelter of the tram terminus.

We hurried, of course, to see and if need be to rescue. We found a considerable crowd of spectators just dispersing, and learnt that some enterprising sportsman had brought his dog to the tram shelter just before our arrival, and that the dog had at once shown a lot of excitement and had set to work scraping away the earth on one side, so as to be able to squeeze into the narrow space between the wooden foundations of the shelter and the ground.

THE INQUISITIVE MONGOOSE

The crowd, naturally, at once went round to that side to enjoy the fun, and the unknown animal very wisely took the providential chance of safety, slipped under the edge of the shelter on the opposite side from the dog, and disappeared into the adjoining cabbage patch.

As to the animal—well, it might have been a ferret or it might have been a weasel, but Bill James swore it was an otter and two telegraph boys (delaying after the manner of telegraph boys) were certain it was a fox; but, nevertheless, as soon as I mentioned that Robin was missing from his home everyone present (including Bill James and both the telegraph boys) was certain that it was a mongoose.

Feeling by now rather seriously alarmed, we searched the cabbage patch and satisfied ourselves that Robin—if it really was Robin—was well away into the comparative safety of the fields. Then, as there was nothing more to be done at the moment, we went home, hoping against hope that our mongoose would have sought the only shelter that was really safe for him. But he wasn't there, and there was nothing for it but to sit as patiently as we could and await further news.

This came before very long. A friend, who had heard of the disappearance, telephoned to say that she was certain that Robin was hiding under her potting-shed: or if it wasn't Robin it was some other animal whom we, as notorious animal lovers, ought to rescue immediately, as she was having difficulty in restraining her dogs.

As may be imagined, we lost no time in getting to our friend's house. By the time we arrived, one of the

CHERRY KEARTON

dogs had broken loose and was already half-way under the shed. This time the sheltering animal would have had no back door exit, for the potting shed was enclosed on three sides by a brick wall. The dog, to his grievous disappointment, was chivvied off, and in case of accidents I made sure that he and his brother were securely tied up.

Then I lay flat on the ground, in front of the hole which the dog had conveniently enlarged, and tried to peer under the shed. It was too dark to see anything but a form that moved and might have been that of Robin, but might equally well have belonged to almost any other small creature. So I called for a spade and started to finish the dog's work; and three minutes later poor Robin was lying in my wife's arms, utterly exhausted and with his heart still beating furiously from sheer terror.

He lay still in her arms, looking from one to the other in his joy at finding us. But it was some hours before he completely recovered from his fright and that night, for the only time in his life, we let him sleep, rolled in an eiderdown, beside our bed.

BY
FRANK O'CONNOR



MRS. CANTY'S MAN

About Mrs. Canty's man—her real man, I mean—there was nothing very remarkable. He was an ex-policeman, and had some dark secret, I make no doubt, for he was by nature morose and silent, but no one had ever penetrated it, unless perhaps his friends, the birds; and these, if they had, were wise enough to keep it to themselves.

A queerer ceremony you never saw than Canty in the early morning talking to his birds. They came round him as he walked up and down his little patch of terrace garden, and strutted along with him, an old sparrow at one side, a thrush at the other, and chaffinches and crows and the deuce knows what else squabbling behind. Canty fed them and chatted with them, and I swear he talked as one might to Christians. It always struck us as remarkable that he knew them all by name.

“What kept you this past couple of days, Phil?” he asked in his booming melancholy voice, shaking his finger at some grubby little sparrow. “What kept you?”

FRANK O'CONNOR

And where's the wife from you? Ah, my boy, one of these days you'll come to grief!"

"Shut up!" his wife would shout through the kitchen window. "You make me sick."

Better than the chapel bell or the mother's call he was of a morning to make you jump from the warm bed and pull back the curtain to see what he was up to. At first you echoed the grown-ups and said the man was dotty, but somehow after a while you began to detect a sort of elfin humanity about the birds. There in the reddened mist of a frosty morning or the sweet, uncertain light of summer they whizzed about the paling of the neglected garden; hopped, clucked, piped and squabbled like caricatures of real people: some seemed wiser, wealthier, handsomer than others; some were clearly beggars born; some were belligerent like fellows you knew at school; others had thin, piping voices and you almost saw spectacles on their noses and heard them say: "Please, sir, I didn't do it"; others still balanced themselves on the wire of the fence by their long tails like crabbed old men in frock coats.

And then one winter's night Cauty took his secret to another sphere.

For weeks after the birds came back, looking for him. They hopped up the garden, little by little, clearly ill at ease. They came to the very door of the kitchen to Mrs. Cauty, and poked their little heads over the threshold, nodding and chirruping weakly, so that you could almost hear them say: "Where is he? What ails him? Why

MRS. CANTY'S MAN

doesn't he come out? Why? Why? Why? Tell him we're here."

They seemed unable to believe in his absence and to think it all a grave mistake. For a full fortnight they continued to return each morning, but always more half-heartedly, till at last all flew away together. All, that is to say, except two sparrows and a young crow. Morning after morning these came back, in full hope of a resurrection, and waited patiently, squawking and chattering for hours.

Then one February morning Mrs. Canty looked out and saw there were now two crows instead of one. The original three seemed very pleased, for they kept up a continuous, joyous hullabaloo about the newcomer, as though saying: "Look who we've brought! Just look!"

As indeed they might, for never outside a circus was there seen such a monumental old crow with the weight of years and wisdom on him. He had the bones and build of an ostrich, and not as much as one straight feather on his lustreless coat. He seemed to be half asleep but brooding under their feathers were the two foxiest old eyes one could imagine; the eyes of a sleepy old Privy Councillor, a diplomat or a public hangman in retirement. Someone, at least, whose reminiscences one would go a long way to hear.

As this was the first morning Mrs. Canty had felt she was alive at all, she threw them a crust of bread by way of acknowledgment. After this all the birds came back. The old crow seemed to be their acknowledged leader; he had rarely to dispute his share of the spoil, and stood

FRANK O'CONNOR

in the centre of the garden patch with some stray feather cocking out of his backbone, and a wicked gleam in his hooded eyes that seemed to have original night and chaos in their depths.

To understand what followed one needs to know something of Cauty's widow. She was a queer woman; at one time as sweet as honey, at another as malicious as twenty devils. Tall, thin, and bony, with sad, pale, gleaming eyes, a high colour and a hanging lip that showed her discoloured teeth in a watery smile, she seemed to be always in dread lest someone should cheat or injure her. But God help anyone that tried! She was a hard woman to cheat, a woman who conserved her substance as Mother Nature conserves matter. She was always complaining. She was poor or lonely, or her health was bad, or the lodger made noise and wouldn't let her sleep.

One day she was in one of her wicked moods, and as always on such occasions had to take it out on someone. The lodger was at work; it was not the charwoman's day for coming in, her husband who had come in useful for such moods had died. By way of a change she took it out on the birds. Not, of course, that she thought of it that way. It was the birds, heartless little brutes, who presumed upon the sweetness of her nature, and showed no sympathy for her in her many misfortunes.

The birds waited patiently until about eleven o'clock and Mrs. Cauty watched to see them depart. Through the kitchen window she surveyed their pathetic antics with a feeling as close to glee as an unhappy and defenceless widow-woman could command.

MRS. CANTY'S MAN

She was still standing there, her head pressed against the window frame, her weak mouth open with curiosity when all at once she heard a loud volley of bursting wings, a wild caw like the first shriek of a piper's band, and there on the clothes line before her very eyes, sat the big crow, swaying and pawing and staring in at her. And at the very moment when crow and woman looked for the first time into one another's eyes, Mrs. Canty was stricken with terror at the likeness he bore to her late husband. Perhaps she had a drop taken. Perhaps not. But sober or drunk (and no one had ever seen her drunk) who was better qualified to judge of the resemblance? Moaning with fear she went to the pantry and cut him a slice of meat. It is worthy of remark that after this he refused to eat bread and left it to the others.

This was how the crow received the name of "Mrs. Canty's Man". Not trusting her own eyes, the widow had the neighbours in to say whether they too did not see a resemblance. The performance was repeated; the crow was left unfed till in desperation he flew on the line, and perched there, all ruffled, hopping and screaming with fury.

At first the neighbours, though somewhat frightened by this display, were inclined to hold that there was no resemblance; but they soon discovered that this tone did not suit Mrs. Canty, any more than cures for her rheumatics or her delicate stomach with the "booming and bauming" and the "clucking and sucking" and the other botherations which she swore she could hear going on inside it.

FRANK O'CONNOR

Besides, other things happened that made them change their mind. This crow of Mrs. Canty's was certainly no natural crow—whether it was anything else I leave to those best qualified to judge.

One morning a woman called Mrs. Geney came to see the marvel. When she arrived the back door was open; on a chair facing the window sat Mrs. Canty and on the line outside sat the crow, balancing himself awkwardly and never once taking his eyes off her.

“Caw! Caw!” bawled the crow.

“Caw! Caw!” mocked Mrs. Canty. “No meat! No meat!”

Just as though he understood the crow began to prance excitedly on the line, his wings fluttering and his big head thrust forward.

“No meat!” repeated Mrs. Canty. “Where would I get it?”

Then she turned and gave Mrs. Geney a watery smile, showing her gums.

“Look at him!” she said. “That was the way he used to go on if I was after spending too much. An extravagant woman, that's what he used to call me. . . .”

“Caw! Caw! Caw!” shrieked the crow, and Mrs. Geney thought that it was not extravagant the crow was calling her at all, but something a decent woman would not wish to repeat. And certainly it had no connection with extravagance.

“Ah, a nice way you left me!” Mrs. Canty continued with her unpleasant laugh. “Me with my four ungrateful children gone from me, and the lodger robbing me, and

MRS. CANTY'S MAN

the booming and bauming and the pains in my back!"

"All right! All right!" said the crow (at least that was how Mrs. Geney interpreted it), and without wasting another breath, bent and made a grab at a clothes' peg. He tugged furiously at it, leaning back on the line, until he wrenched it off and tossed it contemptuously into the yard. Then he clapped his wings, shook his head and gave a low squawk of triumph. Mrs. Geney, overcome with fright, covered her eyes.

"Did you ever see the like of that?" asked Mrs. Canty with exultation.

"I did not," said Mrs. Geney, "and I hope I never do again."

Even as she spoke the crow tossed down another peg and a vest of Mrs. Canty's fell into the yard.

"And there's the crow they said wasn't my husband!" shouted Mrs. Canty. "The wicked defamers, why aren't they here now? . . . There was never another man in the Force like him. Twice he smashed up the little home on me. . . . So you're at it again, are you?" she cried to the crow, leaping up, tapping the window pane and laughing like a mad woman. By way of rejoinder the crow gave her a quick, wicked glance and made a hop towards the next peg. The women watched while he sent a pair of the lodger's pants down the shore.

"By the Lord above," cried Mrs. Geney with sudden resolution. "I'll face him if he was twenty devils," and rushed to the back door, stamping and clapping her hands. "Back to hell where you came from!" she commanded.

The crow, entirely unconcerned, looked at her malig-

nantly. The look he gave her sent the blood to her head. With a shout of rage she seized the sweeping brush and rushed at him. Only then did he raise himself on wide lazy wings and take refuge on the water chute. He leaned forward and looked down at her.

"Caw!" he drawled scornfully.

Muttering curses at him, she pinned up the fallen clothes. Then she saw Mrs. Cauty standing at the door, and realized by the cold gleam in the widow's pale eyes that she was mortally offended. Mrs. Geney tried to make the best of a bad situation.

"If I was you", she said, "I'd have prayers said for the old man."

"Would you now?" asked Mrs. Cauty, showing her gums in the wateriest of smiles.

Mrs. Geney saw that she had only made things worse. Not only had she chased Mrs. Cauty's crow—the most remarkable and disturbing of the widow's misfortunes—with a sweeping brush, but she had also used nasty words which implied that poor Mrs. Cauty had not already troubles enough of her own to get prayers said for—the bad behaviour of her children, the booming and bauming, the clucking and sucking, and pains in the back—without looking after her late husband's as well.

But Mrs. Geney did not even inspire the misfortune that followed; a misfortune that so embittered relations between the two women that even death itself will not restore them. It was Jackie Mangan who did that. Jackie was Mrs. Geney's ward, and the first and only thing he ever succeeded in bringing down with his catapult was

M R S . C A N T Y ' S M A N

the crow. It was only when he summoned his elder sister Josie to admire the deed that he realized what he had done.

"Merciful Hour!" exclaimed Josie, closing her brown eyes in a convincing simulacrum of a ladylike swoon. "'Tis Mrs. Canty's man."

Jackie's face began to fall.

"Janey Mack!" she continued. "Me da will murder you. He'll kill you stone dead with a clout!"

Jackie looked at the catapult and then at the dead crow, his wit unable to break the maddening link of cause and effect.

"Sure, what is it but an ould crow?" he said.

"Oh!" said Josie dramatically, feigning deafness, "and 'tisn't that I mind but what'll happen after."

"What'll happen?" asked Jackie.

"You'll be hanged."

"I don't mind," drawled Jackie mildly after a moment's thought.

"Aha! You wait till they come for you!"

"Who'll come?"

"The bobbies."

At this point Jackie began to snivel. He didn't mind hanging but he couldn't bear policemen.

"Anyway", she continued, "it might be as well for you to be hanged. Otherwise he'll haunt you. . . . Of course", she said with the calmness of resignation, "twould be nearly as bad on me as on you. Ould Geney wouldn't stop, and me da wouldn't stop, but I'd have to stop to mind you."

When Jackie had cried himself sick she had an inspira-

FRANK O'CONNOR

tion. "Jackie," she said, "I know what we'll do. We'll bury him in constecrated ground the way he can't haunt you."

That evening Mrs. Gency remained in, so they had no opportunity of taking the corpse to the cemetery. And that night Josie had a further inspiration. She came to Jackie's bed in her nightdress, on tiptoe, with one finger uplifted in incantation against her father who snored unmelodiously in the corner.

"Jackie!" she hissed, shaking him. "We won't have to take him to the graveyard at all."

"Who?" snivelled Jackie drowsily.

"Mrs. Cauty's man."

"Why?"

"Because you're going to be the priest, so you can constecrate the ground and all."

"What's constecrate?"

"Jay!" exclaimed Josie. "He dunno what constecrate is yet."

On the following evening while their father was at the pub and Mrs. Gency gossiping down the road, they buried the crow in the back field. Jackie was dressed from head to foot in an old apron of Mrs. Gency's on which Josie had painted two brilliant crosses. In one hand he held a lighted candle, in the other a prayer book. Josie had a holy water font and a battered dinner bell.

"What'll I say now?" asked Jackie nervously.

"Ah, be saying things," replied Josie lightly.

"Sure, when I don't know 'em!"

M R S . C A N T Y ' S M A N

"Say them under your breath, so."

So he said things under his breath, and loud and clear Josie tinkled her dinner bell and responded in a solemn tone:

"Hurraymus! Hurrahmus!"

She slowly filled in the grave. Jackie made a step backwards and caught his foot in the apron. "Ah, Jacus!" he said, but his sister gave him a look of such reproach that he bowed his head.

"Will I say more things now?" he asked obediently.

"Do," replied Josie. "And say 'em slow."

So Jackie said more things, and they remained looking at the grave. As the helmet of shadow tilted forward upon the world the stars burned more clearly in the infinities about them. For the last time Josie tinkled her little bell.

"Hurraymus! Hurrahmus!" she said.

BY
FRANK PENN-SMITH



HANG!

The cat suddenly presented itself to the diffident old lady as she stood on her doorstep. It was a complete stranger, and wore a disastrous appearance, being badly damaged about the fur and ears.

“Puss! Puss!” expostulated the pitiful old lady in a shocked way.

The cat glared at her for a time in doubt and misgiving. Then, erecting an irregular tail, it bolted past her into the house, crying “Hang!” in a shrill tone.

What was she to do?

The cat made the house its home. She had not the heart, she said, to turn it out. Perhaps she had not the chin to do it—for determination requires chin. Not that the cat had any particular chin, but then its determination showed in its eyes: gloomy, lustrous eyes, that were resolute, nay ruthless, even when it was purring.

The diffident old lady looked upon it with pride and misgiving.

“It took to me at once!” she would say; and that was really what happened. The cat had taken to her, and the

H A N G !

house, and everything that was in it, at that one decisive instant on the doorstep. "This will do!" it had said to itself, and looked no further.

The old lady was timidly methodical. As she had been set going in her youth she would go on, until the works would slow down and the pendulum stop. But there was always an irresponsible uncertainty about the cat and its actions. Even when nodding on the hearthrug it would suddenly whisper "Hang!" and rush off as though in response to some invisible summons. Yes, there was a mystery about the cat. Its eyes showed it when she caught it up and looked deep into them. Then it would struggle and break away from her.

In the course of time they became necessary to each other, this strangely assorted couple. The cat introduced just that amount of untamed nature into the atmosphere which appealed to the old lady and made perfect their desolate companionship.

But it was a peculiar animal. She admitted that she could not regulate it.

"It goes its way and I go mine," she would say. But she didn't. She went the cat's way. If the animal mewed, she would leave what she was doing to attend to it. If it patted her with its paw, which it would do when neglected, she would drop her work at once and talk to it, until it began to doze comfortably. Her talk was foolish, no doubt, but in the right tone; and cats' language is tone, not words.

But an observer might have noticed that the cat did not reciprocate these unselfish attentions. True, it would

sometimes trot after her—but that was into the larder. For the rest it was extraordinarily contradictory. It would never stay where it was put, nor do what was wished. If she wanted it to remain in one place, no bonds could restrain it; but if she wished it to stay away, no vigilance could prevent its silent return when least expected. If she wanted to go out, the cat would be waiting to come in, and when the door was opened would rush in past her, crying “Hang!” in a shrill tone. But if she were coming in, it would be anxiously watching to get out, and would rush forth past her crying “Hang!” in its weird voice; though, once out, energy would desert it, and it would prowl about among the grass like a modified tiger in two minds.

But there! Why make so much of a mere cat? Because no one could help it—or rather, because the old lady couldn’t. The secretive savagery and unconquerable disposition of the animal appealed to the last carnivorous sparks of its timid old mistress’s ancestors: for she was the almost burnt-out ember from the souls of bloodthirsty Berserkers who had stuck at nothing in their day.

But there was altogether too much Berserker about the old lady’s cousin, who suddenly came to live with her. She was a red-faced woman, with the voice of a wheelbarrow and the complexion of a brick. Her clack and scream were heard all over the once silent dwelling. She had come on a visit and stayed, not to be got rid of. She had insisted on paying half the rent, and simply annexed the whole establishment, saying that the old lady must not be left alone. The latter shrank from her, wounded to

H A N G !

the very heart by the desecrations of her little foolish privacies, but helpless to resist. The coarser nature could not be made to feel, and her own feelings would not allow her to try to make it.

The newcomer settled down to the work of her heart—to have everything her own way. She altered everything by degrees, to the unspeakable distress of the old lady, whose nervous rebellions were pitiful in their futility. But in changing everything she came into conflict with the habits of the cat, which she had scarcely heeded before this.

Now that it attracted her attention she saw a concentrated malignance in its glance whenever she came near; though it generally pretended not to see her, fixing its attention in a solemn stare on something else, or stalking uneasily about with an insulted expression, jerking its tail convulsively.

Time wore on, and intimacy brought irritability. The discontented temper of the red-faced woman, which had been dormant while the place was new, began to churn the moral atmosphere of the dwelling. The timid old lady entrenched herself, as well as she could, in silence, which aggravated the positive woman, eager to dominate everything, even the ideas of others.

For this reason the latter could not endure the cat. Its obstinacy and activity were greater than her own, and she could not crush it, while accidents often gave it the advantage.

“Oh, the brute!” she gasped, when she had stumbled over it down the cellar steps. “It nearly broke my neck.”

The old lady tittered, but stopped short in a fit of nervousness. The cousin was fat and had no neck. Her chin stood out from her chest like the ram of a destroyer. Her face flushed a deeper red as she glared at the yellow-eyed cat crouching in the corner.

"If I had the poker I'd kill it!" she cried.

"Hush! Hush!" went the horrified old lady.

"I would then!" shrieked the other. "You and your beast of a cat! Yah!" she cried, stamping at the animal in the corner.

Next instant, with a horrid cry—half gurgle, half squeal—the cat sprang right at her face in a frenzy of fury. With a snap like a steel trap it had bitten her cheek and scored her face across with a pawful of claws before she could cry out. In her backward start the woman tripped over the fender, and fell with a crash among the fire-irons. The elder woman stood simply petrified, her timid eyes dilated, her hands clasped.

The cat had vanished like a black flash. The red-faced woman gradually got up, unhelped, her face bleeding.

"There!" she said. "See what you have done now! You and your cat!"

"I'm very sorry—very sorry," twittered the old lady, recovering her voice and coming forward. "How very dreadful! Are you much hurt? Let me see!"

"Go away!" returned the other bitterly, with handkerchief to face. "You and your wild cat!"

"But you shouldn't have teased it."

"It shall be killed!" said the red-faced woman.

The old lady drew herself tremblingly together.

H A N G !

"The cat shan't be touched—except by me," she said.

"I shall leave the house!" exclaimed the other.

The old lady looked eagerly at her, but her lips were silent.

"I won't live in the house with a mad cat and a fool!" spluttered the fat woman. "It isn't safe!—Cat's bites—poisonous—lockjaw," she whined. And so it went on—stormy silence broken by squalls of reproach but the old lady, tremulously silent, clung with timid obstinacy to protecting the life of the cat.

"What do you mean to do?" asked the fat woman hoarsely at last.

"If we can't agree," quavered the old lady, "one of us had better go."

"Which is it to be?"

There was a silence.

"Shall we draw lots?" asked the red-faced woman, leering at the old lady, who looked up eagerly.

"Anything you like!" she whispered, only too anxious for any ending to this dreadful partnership.

At that moment the closed door clicked and clattered. It was the cat trying to get in.

"There!" cried the fat woman. "The cat back again!" Then, after a pause: "If the cat mews when you open the door, you are to go. If the cat comes in silent—I shall go!"

This was a transparent fraud. The cat always cried out on entering. Nevertheless, after a moment's anxious hesitation, the old lady, willing to risk anything, even her old home, to an escape from this tyranny, grasped at the alternative. The absurdity of the bargain was lost sight of in the importance of the issue.

The agitated old lady raised her hand timidly to the latch, and, with her other hand on her breast, stared in a helpless way at the slowly entering cat. The cat, with chary, calculating steps, came creeping in.

It jerked a look up at its mistress and seemed about to speak, but checked itself and licked its reluctant lips into silence.

Then it advanced a few steps and leered at its enemy, as it adjusted its eyes to the lamp on the table. The red-faced woman regarded it with hatred and expectancy.

The cat then began to peer at her venomously, with its ears bent obliquely backward and its fur rising.

It lifted its head suddenly and glared at her over an imaginary obstacle. Then it stooped and looked for a length of time under the imaginary obstacle. Lastly, with a furtive, tigerish back-glance to see where the door was, it retreated slowly backward, step by step, to the threshold, in complete silence.

Then it bolted out back into the darkness.

The old lady gave a sigh of relief.

The red-faced woman got on to her feet.

"I shall go and put on my bonnet at once!" she cried.

"Oh, not to-night!" mildly remonstrated the old lady, who had found her tongue.

"This very minute!" cried the other. "You have turned me out of the house and I mean to go. You shan't stop me. I will go next door and tell them why."

Even this threat did not seem to ruffle the gentle hopefulness that was returning to the outraged nature of the elder woman.

H A N G !

"Oh, if you must, you must," she murmured.

"I *will*!" cried the other.

And strange to say, she did.

When she had gone, the old lady sat for an indefinite time on the bottom stair, regardless of the guttering of the candle which she had placed on the ground after her cousin had left. The house seemed emptied of some disruptive agency, and the old lady sat there, slowly settling down into her old plane of thought.

"I shall move everything back into its proper place in the morning," she murmured.

Then she arose, and looked out at the door, as though to make sure the tyrant was indeed gone.

At that moment the cat appeared, large-eyed with the pathos that succeeds fury. Its fur was still on end. It looked up at her disconsolately.

"Puss!" she whispered. "Come in, Puss!"

The cat raised its tail and trotted solemnly through the half-opened door with a low, melancholy whimper.

Then it stole slowly on tiptoe from room to room, looking keenly everywhere and sniffing anxiously in the air.

Finally, when quite assured of the disappearance of its enemy, it flung itself, in a passion of purrs, at the feet of its still trembling mistress, and, gazing yearningly up at her through its mysterious slits of eyes, it fondly murmured "Hang!"

BY
C. B. POULTNEY



POMPEY

When bright, intelligent people look at Pompey and say "Jolly little chap. Scalyham, eh?" I beam upon them and admit the truth of their suggestion.

When intelligent, bright people look at Pompey and say "Lively little chap. Rough-haired terrier, eh?" I smile upon them and agree.

Even when people say "Nippy little fellow, miniature sheep-dog, isn't he?" I just give a faint grin, and nod vaguely; and draw attention to the weather.

But when coarse, unintellectual people point at Pompey and say "Gosh! is that your dog? What breed is he?" I call Pompey away from sniffing their legs and, raising my hat (or not, as the case may be), I and my dog walk haughtily away. Moreover, in the future, when we see such folk approaching, we invariably cut them.

I mention these things to start with, so that you can by no possible means say I am deceiving you about my dog. I mean, if you are the class of person to whom anything less than a thoroughbred, with a pedigree originally O.K.'d by Noah (or more probably Shem; Noah being

P O M P E Y

busy with other things) is beneath notice, I would prefer you to close this book here and now, lest you be disgusted later on.

But on the other hand, if you don't really worry who a dog's great-grandfather was; if all you ask for in a dog is just to be a dog, and a pal, and a chap who doesn't worry what you wear, or whom you know, or who *your* great-grandfather was, so long as you treat him fair, and take him for walks, and don't sometimes mind spending a quarter of an hour throwing an old tennis ball a long way from you, just for the doubtful pleasure of having it brought back (in a very slimy condition) to be thrown again. If (I say) you like a dog who is, at times, slightly insane, and at other times a perfect darned nuisance, then—— Meet Pompey! . . .

There is (as I have hinted already) a certain mystery, a kind of, as it were, murkiness, attached to Pompey's parentage. His mother, I know, was a perfectly good terrier. At least when I say "Good", I use the word merely to describe her breeding. So far as her behaviour went she was—the expression is not too strong—a curse. She was, without exception, the most energetic thing in the dog line I have ever met. Her name was Phosphorine, and she lived up to it. She could and, in fact, continually did, jump higher than any member of the canine tribe I have ever encountered.

Whether this gift appeals to the gentlemen of Dogdom I know not, but apparently it does, for at any rate one morning Phosphorine retired into the wine cellar, and there, all among the empty cardboard boxes and old golf

sticks, Pompey appeared. . . . He was, though I shouldn't like him to hear me say so, the oddest child one could well imagine. He had an enormous head, a red nose, a hairless body, and—well, he looked not unlike a baby hippopotamus, or what I imagine a baby hippopotamus *does* look like. Even his mother didn't seem impressed, for an hour afterwards she was running round the lawn after a sparrow, with the air of one who had made an unfortunate mistake and wants to forget about it as soon as possible. The infant Pompey, meanwhile, with eyes tightly shut, and uttering faint mouse-like squeaks, was being wrapped in a blanket and placed in the nice cosy box which was to be his home for some considerable period. . . .

And so he grew, if not in beauty, at least in girth. Yes, he certainly grew in girth. Possibly it was being the only child that did it, but Pompey was always a husky; and with an appetite to match. Soon he was big enough to sit up and look over the side of his bed, and then one day he put his fat little paws on the edge of the box, drew himself up, grunting horribly, wobbled wildly for a moment and then, with a shrill squark, fell out on the top of his head. (Whether that fall seriously affected his brain, and accounts for some of the things he has done since, is a question that will probably never be solved!)

However, fall or no fall, he had proved that it *could* be done and from that time on, the box was no prison to Pompey.

In future the world was his oyster—or perhaps I should say bone, and he could explore it at will. So he got up, shook himself, gave a cheerful grin, waggled his stump of a tail, and proceeded to explore.

P O M P E Y

The grin, and the wag, I may say, were—and are—typical of Pompey. His motto is: when in doubt, grin and wag! . . . A merry heart goes all the way, in Pompey's opinion, and if necessary I believe he would be prepared to waggle his way round the world. It certainly is an amazing waggle, too: a full, wholehearted waggle that nearly lifts his back legs off the ground, and in moments of extreme ecstasy positively creates a draught about the room.

Now he is older he appears to have attained a certain mastery over his rudder-wagglng apparatus; but in his very young days the thing was so completely out of hand that it used seriously to impede his stability.

I shall always remember his first long walk: along the hall to my study. My door was open, and as I wrote, a vague movement at the end of the passage caught my attention. I looked up, and then I saw him, emerging cautiously round the kitchen door.

"Hullo!" I called. "Come on!" and he came on. It was a struggle though; that first long walk. For one thing his head appeared top heavy, and kept on tipping him forward; and when with the aid of a hasty plunge he seemed to have caught up with himself, his tail would take control, and start wagglng furiously. . . . Then Pompey would look over his shoulder to see what was happening behind, fall over his feet, and finish up by sprawling spreadeagled on the linoleum, looking like a sort of unknown species of star-fish. But though defeated he was undaunted, and after getting his wind, he grinned up at me, lurched to his feet, uttered a loud and encouraging squark, and charged forward again.

“Splendid!” I called encouragingly—and then his rudder got out of control once more and steered him violently into the wall.

“Phoof!” gasped Pompey, collapsing.

But it’s dogged (as has been so frequently pointed out) that does it, and once more the intrepid traveller collected his ungainly limbs, gave his mutinous tail a stern glance, and essayed the passage.

And this time he was successful. “Hurray!” I said as, squarking with pride and excitement, he fell on my feet. “Done it, my lad. The full three and a half yards in under five minutes. Pretty good going, if I may say so!”

Pompey grinned and his tail wagged fearfully. “Ooh, I knew it *could* be done,” he said airily. “Just a question of strong will and determination, that’s all.”

“Absolutely,” I declared in approving tones. “Now, how about your walking back again—or would you rather I carried you?”

Pompey glanced thoughtfully down that long, long trail; then he looked up at me; then he twiddled for a moment with his toes.

“We-el,” he said, “I think, if you don’t mind, I’d rather you carried me. Not”—he explained quickly—“that I *couldn’t* walk it, you know; don’t think that for a minute. No, the only thing I have against walking is this—it does make one’s nose so sore!”

After this episode, Pompey’s progress, though not rapid, was steady.

Gradually his nose shed its ruddy hue, and as his legs also lost some of their instability, the accusations of

P O M P E Y

inebriation, which had been so frequently levelled against him by mocking male visitors, lost their sting.

Also, his hair started to grow, and a pleasing covering of soft white down gradually covered over that round and curiously spotty body, concealing its nudity from the gaze of the vulgar. In fact, at last Pompey began to look almost like a little dog, and lady visitors, who previously had gazed upon him with something akin to repulsion, now started crooning a little and wanting to nurse him.

Of course, they regretted it immediately afterwards, for Pompey had by this time decided in his small and wicked mind what his life work should be. At night, in his bed, he had apparently had a "Call". I imagine that he had started up in the darkness, wagged his tail, grinned, and then, raising a paw, he had taken a solemn vow. "So help me Bones" (I imagine him saying). "Henceforth my life shall be devoted to one thing: the collection of human nose-tips!" and he had grinned, wriggled, lain down, and gone to sleep again.

After which, for some considerable period, no nose was really safe from him.

Of course, I admit that a trait of this sort is no credit in a little dog; but Pompey has never been what one might call a good example to Doghood. No doubt there *are* good little puppies who never have such wicked thoughts; who, when they are crooned over by female admirers, merely wriggle and give the sweet face bending over them a gentle little lick; being rewarded for their virtue by a mouthful of luscious powder.

Again, there are no doubt many not quite so good little

puppies who are tempted to have just *one* nip, but on being sternly reprimanded and slightly spanked, are filled with remorse and shame at their wickedness and thereafter mend their ways.

But Pompey was not like that. I don't think he meant to be unkind or naughty, but he had his life work to think of! Also, I am convinced that he considered nose-biting was a most exquisite jest; and if Pompey strikes on what he thinks is a really good mirth-provoking joke he wants the world to join in the merriment.

Yes, I am sure that Pompey was honestly amazed when the victim of his demonstration drew back with startled squark, and registered pain and passion.

"Funny!" he'd say to himself as he was ejected with force and contumely from yet another lap. "They don't seem to get the humour of this, somehow. Oh well, I suppose it's a bit too subtle for 'em; I must remember they're only human, after all. Anyway, I'll persevere; they're bound to get it sooner or later."

And so it would come about that some new arrival, lured into a false sense of security by the urchin's welcoming grin and ingratiating wriggle, would lean forward invitingly—and the merry jest would be performed all over again, and Pompey would be cast into the outer darkness, there to ponder over the dourness of the world into which he had been born. After which he would go and bite his mother, just to keep things going.

But when he grew a little older Phosphorine departed, so Pompey was left (as Bill put it) to offend for himself, with no mother to guide him.

P O M P E Y

So now Pompey is in sole charge of me and Patrick, the black cat; and in the following sketches I have tried to give some idea of his mode of behaviour and general adventures.

POMPEY'S GANG

I regret to say that Pompey is a Gangster. I didn't know it until the other day, when the paper boy told me, but since then I have proved it by personal observation:

Pompey is in league with a tough crowd.

It's my own fault, I suppose. I ought to have known that a dog like Pompey, if allowed to roam at large, would instinctively become mixed up with doubtful company. One has only to look at him to see that.

If he had been a small boy he would have been the sort of small boy who plays truant from Sunday School, and fishes for tiddlers in the Close Season.

So, I ought never to let him out on his own.

But it's all rather difficult. You see, I never seem to be able to get up in the mornings, somehow, so Pompey always has an early stroll by himself.

At first he used to hang around near the front door, and content himself by making rude remarks in an undertone about the passers-by, but lately I have been noticing that as soon as he is let out he hurries round the corner with a purposeful air, as one who has an appointment.

I've spoken to him about it once or twice.

"Look here," I said the other day, "you've been a very long time, my lad. Where have you been?"

He wagged all over.

"Ooh, nowhere particular," he replied evasively. "Just strolling round, you know. Had breakfast yet?"

However, a few mornings ago he was away so long that I went out and whistled for him.

As I was doing so the paper boy ambled past.

"'E's in the square, sir," he told me grinning: "with his gang."

"Gang!" I was perturbed. The word had an ominous ring about it, somehow. Then, as I waited, Pompey appeared round the corner, waddling busily along the pavement with his tail cocked at a jaunty angle.

He gave a little start as he saw me waiting.

"Hullo," he said awkwardly. "I was just——"

"Just a minute," I said. "What's all this I hear about a Gang?" He assumed an absurdly overdone air of innocence.

"Gang? Gang?" he repeated vaguely. "Must be some mistake."

However, I was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery, so one morning I got up early, gave Pompey a few moments' start, and then followed him, and in the far corner of the square I spotted him—with his Gang.

There were four of them altogether; a little, hairy brown dog, a black spaniel, a largish white hound, and Pompey himself; they were planted in a row under a wall, on the top of which sat a large yellow cat, who was gazing down at them placidly.

As I watched Pompey appeared to give a word of command, and the little brown dog leapt up in an obviously futile attempt to catch the cat's tail, while the Gang barked

P O M P E Y

in chorus and the cat, quite unperturbed, continued to gaze calmly down.

The brown dog had three leaps and then sat down again, panting.

"Bad luck!" said Pompey briskly.

"Next!" and the jumping performance was gone through by each dog in turn; after which the Gang, shaking tails warmly and agreeing to meet on the following morning, adjourned for breakfast, and I slipped off home, leaving the cat still sitting peacefully aloft.

I don't think Pompey's Gang need be reported to Scotland Yard; not at present, anyway.

POMPEY BRINGS A PAL

I opened the door in response to a faint yelp from outside.

"Come in," I said, and Pompey squirmed past me.

"Now, look here," I said. "I'm getting a bit tired of this gang business; you stay out later and later. Why don't you ask a friend round here occasionally? It would be ever so much nicer than playing about the road. No, don't grin like an imbecile; I'm being serious," and I retired, leaving Pompey gazing after me thoughtfully.

The next morning he went forth as usual, and some time later I heard a scuffling noise on the landing by the back door.

I held the door open, but instead of entering, Pompey merely remained on the threshold and indulged in a positively ague-like attack of wags, at the same time rolling his eyes up at me in a most idiotic manner.

"What on earth is the matter?" I asked, quite alarmed at his odd behaviour. "Why don't you——"

And then I suddenly realized that he was not alone. Lurking coyly on the top step behind him was a small brown dog, who was regarding me intently.

"Hullo," I said. "Who's this?"

Pompey's tail positively threatened to fly loose from its moorings.

"Friend of mine," he explained incoherently. "Quite a nice chap. Thought p'r'aps you wouldn't mind——"

"Of course not," I said heartily. "Bring him in."

Pompey turned and a whispered conversation took place.

"Come in," he said eagerly, "it's all right."

"Are you sure?" asked his friend, cautiously. "Who's that, anyway?"

"It's only the Guv'nor," replied Pompey, "It's all *right*, I tell you. Come on, he won't bite."

The little brown dog looked as if he wasn't too sure, but at last he followed Pompey in cautiously, keeping one eye on me.

"Here we are, then," said Pompey, assuming a jaunty air to cover his obvious self-consciousness. "This is my kitchen, old man. Look! There's the water bowl I was telling you about. Nice, isn't it? Have a drink."

The friend, thus encouraged, approached the bowl, sniffed, and sipped.

"I say—steady on!" said Pompey hurriedly. "Don't take it *all*, old man. Er—what do you think of my dresser?"

P O M P E Y

The little brown dog was by this time feeling obviously more at home; he sidled up to me and wagged his tail.

"That's the spirit," I said, patting him.

Strangely enough Pompey, instead of being pleased, appeared rather to resent this. He gave his friend a distinctly unfriendly look and tried to butt him aside.

"Don't do that," I reproved; "it's most unhost-like. I think your friend is charming. Does he like sugar?"

"No," said Pompey hastily, "he doesn't; he hates it!"

"Rubbish!" I said, taking a lump from the basin. "I don't believe you. Here you are, Friend," I said, holding it out, and then—well, I'm not sure quite what happened then, but it finished with the undignified departure of Friend, yelping loudly; while Pompey, having assisted him downstairs, returned looking rather ruffled.

"Well!" I said to him, "what a disgraceful——"

Pompey grinned apologetically.

"My fault," he said. "Should never have introduced him. Greedy little beast! Now, what happened to—— Ah! there it is," and he finished the lump of sugar.

Friendship goes far—but there are limits.

POMPEY'S GARDEN

Until Pompey moved to this address, he had forgotten what it was like to have a garden of his own. From quite an early age, whenever he had gone outside his door, he had found himself in the street, and we used to use the Gardens at Kensington when we needed exercise. Therefore, when he was presented with a wide open space (about twenty feet square) into which he was at liberty to

wander at any time of the day, he couldn't quite get the hang of it at first.

To start with, when I opened the back door, he rushed out gaily, under the impression that he was going for a walk. "Come on," he shouted. "Let's go——" and then he stopped and looked up at the wall in a puzzled sort of way.

"I say," he said, coming back to me. "This is no good for a walk—it's all stopped up round the edges."

"It's all right." I assured him. "It's meant to be like that, you know," and I struck an attitude of modest pride. "This is *our garden!*" I explained.

Pompey sniffed. "Well," he said, "I don't think much of it"—and went indoors again.

However, curiosity overcame him, and presently I looked out of the window and saw him exploring. It took him quite a long time to get round, because he had to sniff every blade of grass and each separate leaf. Then he put his head down and—"Hi!" I shouted through the window, "Stop that!"

He looked up, startled. "Stop what?" he asked innocently.

"Stop that digging," I said severely.

He shrugged his shoulders. . . . "Oh," he said. "No digging? Right!" and I went back to my work.

Presently I glanced out again and—"Hi!" I shouted. "Leave that alone!" and I went out and spoke to him. "Listen!" I said sternly. "There are one or two things you have got to learn, dog. One—don't start digging holes. Two—don't bite those flowers off. Do you understand?"

P O M P E Y

Pompey rolled his eyes and slunk indoors.

"Well!" he muttered. "What a place! I dunno! Can't dig, can't pick, can't—what's the *use* of the thing, anyway?" and he sat down just inside the door and looked acutely depressed, while I went back to my work.

Suddenly he gave a wild whoop—causing me to drop my pen—and shot out into the garden, just in time to miss a strange cat, who flew back over the wall, saving his tail by inches.

Pompey turned to me with a beaming face.

"I say," he grinned, "why didn't you tell me? I see the *idea* of the place now—you've got *cats* laid on!"

He wouldn't be without our garden for worlds!

POMPEY'S LITTLE WAY

"Oh, my goodness, dog," I said. "Can't you walk properly?"

We were starting for a walk and, as usual, Pompey was behaving like an unusually violent imbecile.

It's always the same in the morning; the moment I put my shoes on Pompey becomes mentally deranged. First he hurls himself, with a painful thud, at the front door; then, finding it impossible to force it open the wrong way, or knock a hole in it, he comes tearing back to me, panting frenziedly.

"Come on!" he gasps.

"Keep *still*, then," I retort, trying to grab him and fasten his harness.

"How can I do this up if you keep turning round and round in circles, you owl?"

"Well, you're so *slow*," he shouts. "Ow! that's my neck you're pinching."

"Serves you right," I say, wrestling with him. "Ah, that's it! Now we can start," and I manage to get the door open—no easy task, as Pompey has got the mat wedged against it, and every time I try to move it away he stands on it—and out we go.

"Which way? Which way?" asks Pompey, plunging from side to side. "Up there? Down here? Whoop! Off we go!"

And we go tacking round the corner like *Shamrock* on a stormy day.

Yesterday we went straight down the hill, and turning into a quiet side road I let him off the lead. Instantly, like a shot from a gun, he went whizzing up the pavement in the direction of some railings and a wooden gate, and the next instant the concert had started.

It happens every time we pass that gate, for on the other side of it lives a dog. I have never seen it, because the gate and railings are high and solid, but there is just one gap, low down, and through this gap Pompey and the other dog exchange greetings of the most ferocious description.

Really, some of the things they say to each other I couldn't possibly repeat; they're too terrible.

"Hullo, you unmentionable so-and-so," yells Pompey tauntingly. "Open this gate—if you dare!"

"Get off the earth, you unwashed thingummy," howls the other, gnashing his teeth through the gap. "Oh, if I could only get at you—just for two minutes. Grrr!"

P O M P E Y

“Grrr! and re-grrr!” bellows Pompey, trembling in every hair. “Open this gate, you—you—— Aaah!”

And then I arrive and haul him off, choking wildly.

Yesterday, both members of the duet were unusually vocal, and as I removed Pompey I felt compelled to speak to him rather severely.

“Look here,” I said, “I do think you ought to restrain yourself a little. After all, you’ve never actually *met* that little dog, have you? Then why on earth do you hate him so?”

Pompey stopped panting, and looked up at me in honest bewilderment.

“Hate him?” he repeated. “Me—*hate* him? Well, I’m blessed! I thought you understood dogs. Why, we think the world of each other—both of us. Hate him, eh? That’s *good!*”

And he grinned over my mistake for the rest of the walk.

Queer creatures, dogs.

BY
CHAS. G. D. ROBERTS



DO SEEK THEIR MEAT FROM GOD

One side of the ravine was in darkness. The darkness was soft and rich, suggesting thick foliage. Along the crest of the slope tree-tops came into view—great pines and hemlocks of the ancient unviolated forest—revealed against the orange disc of a full moon just rising. The low rays slanting through the moveless tops lit strangely the upper portion of the opposite steep—the western wall of the ravine, barren, unlike its fellow, bossed with great rocky projections, and harsh with stunted junipers. Out of the sluggish dark that lay along the ravine as in a trough, rose the brawl of a swollen, obstructed stream.

Out of a shadowy hollow behind a long white rock, on the lower edge of that part of the steep which lay in the moonlight, came softly a great panther. In common daylight his coat would have shown a warm fulvous hue, but in the elvish decolourizing rays of that half hidden moon he seemed to wear a sort of spectral grey. He lifted his smooth round head to gaze on the increasing flame, which presently he greeted with a shrill cry. That terrible cry, at

DO SEEK THEIR MEAT FROM GOD

once plaintive and menacing, with an undertone like the fierce protestations of a saw beneath the file, was a summons to his mate, telling her that the hour had come when they should seek their prey. From the lair behind the rock, where the cubs were being suckled by their dam, came no immediate answer. Only a pair of crows, that had their nest in a giant fir-tree across the gulf, woke up and croaked harshly their indignation. These three summers past they had built in the same spot, and had been nightly awakened to vent the same rasping complaints.

The panther walked restlessly up and down, half a score of paces each way, along the edge of the shadow, keeping his wide-open green eyes upon the rising light. His short, muscular tail twitched impatiently, but he made no sound. Soon the breadth of confused brightness had spread itself further down the steep, disclosing the foot of the white rock, and the bones and antlers of a deer which had been dragged thither and devoured.

By this time the cubs had made their meal, and their dam was ready for such enterprise as must be accomplished ere her own hunger, now grown savage, could hope to be assuaged. She glided supplely forth into the glimmer, raised her head, and screamed at the moon in a voice as terrible as her mate's. Again the crows stirred, croaking harshly; and the two beasts, noiselessly mounting the steep, stole into the shadows of the forest that clothed the high plateau.

The panthers were fierce with hunger. These two days past their hunting had been wellnigh fruitless. What scant prey they had slain had for the most part been devoured

by the female; for had she not those small blind cubs at home to nourish, who soon must suffer at any lack of hers? The settlements of late had been making great inroads on the world of ancient forest, driving before them the deer and smaller game. Hence the sharp hunger of the panther parents, and hence it came that on this night they hunted together. They purposed to steal upon the settlements in their sleep, and take tribute of the enemies' flocks.

Through the dark of the thick woods, here and there pierced by the moonlight, they moved swiftly and silently. Now and again a dry twig would snap beneath the discreet and padded footfalls. Now and again, as they rustled some low tree, a pewee or a nuthatch would give a startled chirp. For an hour the noiseless journeying continued, and ever and anon the two grey, sinuous shapes would come for a moment into the view of the now well-risen moon. Suddenly there fell upon their ears, far off and faint, but clearly defined against the vast stillness of the Northern forest, a sound which made those stealthy hunters pause and lift their heads. It was the voice of a child crying—crying long and loud, hopelessly, as if there were no one by to comfort it. The panthers turned aside from their former course and glided toward the sound. They were not yet come to the outskirts of the settlement, but they knew of a solitary cabin lying in the thick of the woods a mile and more from the nearest neighbour. Thither they bent their way, fired with fierce hope. Soon would they break their bitter fast.

Up to noon of the previous day the lonely cabin had been occupied. Then its owner, a shiftless fellow, who

DO SEEK THEIR MEAT FROM GOD

spent his days for the most part at the corner tavern three miles distant, had suddenly grown disgusted with a land wherein one must work to live, and had betaken himself with his seven-year-old boy to seek some more indolent clime. During the long lonely days when his father was away at the tavern the little boy had been wont to visit the house of the next neighbour, to play with a child of some five summers, who had no other playmate. The next neighbour was a prosperous pioneer, being master of a substantial frame house in the midst of a large and well-tilled clearing. At times, though rarely, because it was forbidden, the younger child would make his way by a rough wood road to visit his poor little disreputable playmate. At length it had appeared that the five-year-old was learning unsavoury language from the elder boy who rarely had an opportunity of hearing speech more desirable. To the bitter grief of both children, the companionship had at length been stopped by unalterable decree of the master of the frame house.

Hence it had come to pass that the little boy was unaware of his comrade's departure. Yielding at last to an eager longing for that comrade, he had stolen away late in the afternoon, traversed with endless misgivings the lonely stretch of wood road, and reached the cabin only to find it empty. The door on its leathern hinges swung idly open. The one room had been stripped of its few poor furnishings. After looking in the rickety shed, whence darted two wild and hawklike chickens, the child had seated himself on the hacked threshold, and sobbed passionately with a grief that he did not fully comprehend.

Then seeing the shadows lengthen across the tiny clearing, he had grown afraid to start for home. As the dusk gathered, he had crept trembling into the cabin, whose door would not stay shut. When it grew dark, he crouched in the inmost corner of the room, desperate with fear and loneliness, and lifted up his voice piteously. From time to time his lamentations would be choked by sobs, or he would grow breathless, and in the terrifying silence would listen hard to hear if anyone or anything were coming. Then again would the shrill childish wailings arise, startling the unexpectant night, and piercing the forest depths, even to the ears of those great beasts which had set forth to seek their meat from God.

The lonely cabin stood some distance, perhaps a quarter of a mile, back from the highway connecting the settlements. Along this main road a man was plodding wearily. All day he had been walking, and now as he neared home his steps began to quicken with anticipation of rest. Over his shoulder projected a double-barrelled fowling-piece, from which was slung a bundle of such necessities as he had purchased in town that morning. It was the prosperous settler, the master of the frame house. His mare being with foal, he had chosen to make the tedious journey on foot.

The settler passed the mouth of the wood road leading to the cabin. He had gone perhaps a furlong beyond, when his ears were startled by the sound of a child crying in the woods. He stopped, lowered his burden to the road, and stood straining ears and eyes in the direction of the sound. It was just at this time that the two panthers also

DO SEEK THEIR MEAT FROM GOD

stopped, and lifted their heads to listen. Their ears were keener than those of the man, and the sound had reached them at a greater distance.

Presently the settler realized whence the cries were coming. He called to mind the cabin; but he did not know the cabin's owner had departed. He cherished a hearty contempt for the drunken squatter; and on the drunken squatter's child he looked with small favour, especially as a playmate for his own boy. Nevertheless he hesitated before resuming his journey.

"Poor little devil!" he muttered, half in wrath. "I reckon his precious father's drunk down at 'the Corners,' and him crying for loneliness!" Then he reshouldered his burden and strode on doggedly.

But louder, shriller, more hopeless and more appealing, arose the childish voice, and the settler paused again, irresolute, and with deepening indignation. In his fancy, he saw the steaming supper his wife would have awaiting him. He loathed the thought of retracing his steps, and then stumbling a quarter of a mile through the stumps and bog of the wood road. He was foot-sore as well as hungry, and he cursed the vagabond squatter with serious emphasis; but in that wailing was a terror which would not let him go on. He thought of his own little one left in such a position, and straightway his heart melted. He turned, dropped his bundle behind some bushes, grasped his gun, and made speed back for the cabin.

"Who knows," he said to himself, "but that drunken idiot has left his youngster without a bite to eat in the whole miserable shanty? Or maybe he's locked out, and

the poor little beggar's half scared to death. *Sounds* as if he was scared"; and at this thought the settler quickened his pace.

As the hungry panthers drew near the cabin, and the cries of the lonely child grew clearer, they hastened their steps, and their eyes opened to a wider circle, flaming with a greener fire. It would be thoughtless superstition to say the beasts were cruel. They were simply keen with hunger, and alive with the eager passion of the chase. They were not ferocious with any anticipation of battle, for they knew the voice was the voice of a child, and something in the voice told them the child was solitary. Theirs was no hideous or unnatural rage, as it is the custom to describe it. They were but seeking with the strength, the cunning, the deadly swiftness given them to that end, the food convenient for them. On their success in accomplishing that for which nature had so exquisitely designed them depended not only their own, but the lives of their blind and helpless young, now whimpering in the cave on the slope of the moon-lit ravine. They crept through a wet alder thicket, bounded lightly over the ragged brush fence, and paused to reconnoitre on the edge of the clearing, in the full glare of the moon. At the same moment the settler emerged from the darkness of the wood road on the opposite side of the clearing. He saw the two great beasts, heads down and snouts thrust forward, gliding toward the open cabin door.

For a few moments the child had been silent. Now his voice rose again in pitiful appeal, a very ecstasy of loneliness and terror. There was a note in the cry that shook the

DO SEEK THEIR MEAT FROM GOD

settler's soul. He had a vision of his own boy, at home with his mother, safe-guarded from even the thought of peril. And here was this little one left to the wild beasts! "Thank God! Thank God I came!" murmured the settler, as he dropped on one knee to take a surer aim. There was a loud report (not like the sharp crack of a rifle), and the female panther, shot through the loins, fell in a heap, snarling furiously and striking with her fore-paws.

The male walked around her in fierce and anxious amazement. Presently, as the smoke lifted, he discerned the settler kneeling for a second shot. With a high screech of fury, the lithe brute sprang upon his enemy, taking a bullet full in his chest without seeming to know he was hit. Ere the man could slip in another cartridge the beast was upon him, bearing him to the ground and fixing keen fangs in his shoulder. Without a word, the man set his strong fingers desperately into the brute's throat, wrenched himself partly free, and was struggling to rise, when the panther's body collapsed upon him all at once, a dead weight which he easily flung aside. The bullet had done its work just in time.

Quivering from the swift and dreadful contest, bleeding profusely from his mangled shoulder, the settler stepped up to the cabin door and peered in. He heard sobs in the darkness.

"Don't be scared, sonny," he said, in a reassuring voice. "I'm going to take you home along with me. Poor little lad, I'll look after you if folks that ought to don't."

Out of the dark corner came a shout of delight, in a voice which made the settler's heart stand still. "*Daddy,*

daddy," it said, "I *knew* you'd come. I was so frightened when it got dark!" And a little figure launched itself into the settler's arms, and clung to him trembling. The man sat down on the threshold and strained the child to his breast. He remembered how near he had been to disregarding the far-off cries, and great beads of sweat broke out upon his forehead.

Not many weeks afterwards the settler was following the fresh trail of a bear which had killed his sheep. The trail lead him at last along the slope of a deep ravine, from whose bottom came the brawl of a swollen and obstructed stream. In the ravine he found a shallow cave, behind a great white rock. The cave was plainly a wild beast's lair, and he entered circumspectly. There were bones scattered about, and on some dry herbage in the deepest corner of the den, he found the dead bodies, now rapidly decaying, of two small panther cubs.

BY
FELIX SALTEN



TASSO

Let it be said at once, this story is concerned not with Torquato Tasso nor with Goethe's immortal drama but merely with a dog. If you suppose, moreover, that this "merely" is meant disparagingly, or if you neither understand nor care for dogs, just turn the pages to another story . . . no doubt you'll find something else to read, and, for my part, I'd prefer it.

For the fact that the dog was called Tasso we had no responsibility. Strangely enough, he had already received his high-sounding name when we bought him from a farmer near the Attersee in Upper Austria; and so, having acquired the dog and his name at one stroke, we left the matter to take care of itself. At the time in question we had just returned from London. Among the many things which had impressed us there we recalled certain large and lovely dogs. To us they were an odd, quite unfamiliar breed: almost the size of bears, with curly coats rust-red and iron-grey, and powerful heads which, with the bushy amber-coloured eyebrows, had an expression of human kindliness. We had seen such dogs at Hampton

FELIX SALTEN

Court, in the busy throng of Knightsbridge and Piccadilly and sometimes we had noticed them in the dog-park at Harrods. There they sat, imposing, placid, and dignified, amid the waiting crowd of their kind. Their aloof self-possession rebuffed any attempt at friendliness; to be more exact, they appeared not to be aware if someone spoke to them in a friendly tone, nor did they seem to notice if a stranger were bold enough to stroke them. Their eyes looked ahead with an indifferent stare, or passed rapidly over the stranger with a glance that seemed to say, "Be good enough to desist."

We should have been only too glad if we could have possessed one of these dogs, but the high prices asked by the dealers and the thought of all the difficulties of the long homeward journey deterred us. And then, only a few days after our return to Austria, we met a farmer on the road beside the Attersee lake . . . with precisely such a dog! What an odd coincidence! No, it was the hand of fate.

How, we asked, did the farmer come to possess the dog? A landowner somewhere in the neighbourhood had become bankrupt, although those were still the good old days before the war, and all his property, dead and living, had been sold up. The farmer had bought Tasso with a number of other things. He agreed to pass the dog on to us—and Tasso, far from objecting, did not even turn to look back at the farmer. He accompanied us willingly, cheerfully, as though we had always lived together.

The name Tasso, apart from its literary associations, suited admirably. The proud, resounding word seemed to our ears to harmonize perfectly with the splendid animal

T A S S O

who was strong and intelligent, gentle and majestic. Large curls of rust-red hair streaked with iron-grey covered his big body completely, even down to the powerful paws. The woolly form with its docked tail recalled a Teddy-bear in a fairy-story, yet in its lines, in the lightness of its gait as in all its movements, it had the indescribable charm of noble breeding. Tasso's head sometimes reminded one of a lion, sometimes of Bismarck's face—that was due to the fair, bushy eyebrows and to the deep, meditative look in his beautiful eyes. If one called him when he was lying asleep or dozing, the head, suddenly raised, resembled that of a man whose hand ruffles his hair while he reads, and who, suddenly disturbed, glances up, tousled and embarrassed. In other ways too Tasso was like a human being, but always a worthy and interesting human being. That remark need not cause a smile, for it is sober truth.

When we brought him to the Berghof we were faced by a delicate situation. The manager of the estate had a big black Newfoundland called Moran, a pugnacious creature. We hoped, none the less, that Moran and Tasso might become friends, and we decided to risk it. The two dogs, each held firmly by a chain, approached one another. Moran growled savagely and bared his teeth, while the hair stood up on end along his back. Tasso merely turned away as if to indicate that it was beneath his dignity to take any notice. Clearly, the two were not going to be friends and the affair was likely to end in trouble. All we could do was to delay the outbreak of hostilities as long as possible. Accordingly, Tasso and Moran were kept well apart: while one was out of doors the other had to be shut

FELIX SALTEN

up in a room. Thus we hoped to get through the summer.

Tasso was a delightful companion to have about the house. That was immediately evident as soon as he met the little ginger kitten Mieze of whom we were making a great fuss at that time. When we first took Tasso into the dining-room we had forgotten that the kitten might be there. Mieze came bounding forward. Tasso stood still and then jumped around—we were all terribly alarmed. But Tasso behaved charmingly, and the kitten, from the safety of a chair, played gently and coquettishly with the giant. When we looked for Mieze the next morning she was lying asleep beside Tasso, snuggling closely against his woolly flank, while he, already awake, did not dare to move lest he should disturb her. Two or three weeks later we had another great fright. We met Tasso in the corridor one evening, the little kitten hanging limply from his mouth. At our sharp outcry he laid her very carefully on the floor. Immediately she jumped to her feet unharmed, mewed and left us in no doubt that she wanted to be carried again. Tasso looked up at us inquiringly. "You see, I'm not hurting her," he seemed to say. No, he certainly wasn't hurting her—the honest fellow didn't quite understand that cats often feel lively of an evening and like to go out in search of company. So, when it was time to retire for the night, he used to fetch his little bed-mate, carrying her delicately in his mouth, and refused to settle down until she was safely beside him.

It never entered his head to beg either for the pleasure of being let out of doors or for a titbit at table. Nor did he fall greedily upon his food, but ate quietly, fastidiously,

TASSO

aristocratically, as became the aristocratic dog he was. Occasionally, though not often, he used to come to us, sit down in front of one of us and place a paw on one of our shoulders, so high did he reach even when sitting. The touch of his gentle, heavy paw on one's shoulder never failed to feel like an avowal of eternal friendship.

He was a pleasant comrade for a walk. One hadn't to keep an eye on him all the time. There was never any cause for calling him or admonishing him, still less for punishing him. And he had no taste for fighting unless he were attacked. It was a delight to see how his immense energy found expression in a wild, headlong scamper. He let off the steam, so to speak, of his temperament in innocent, enthusiastic play, rushing away and then back again, always taking good care not to be out of our sight for a moment. That he loved swimming and never seemed weary was little wonder, for he was the very paragon of otterhounds.

Otterhounds are the most formidable enemies in a fight. Their pointed teeth are astonishingly sharp, and the strength of their jaws is annihilating. It is said that they can bite three times while other dogs bite once; thus they are superior to bulldogs, terriers or dachshunds, who fix their teeth once only and then refuse to release their victim. Our first experience of Tasso's fighting qualities was when we were taking him for a walk to the Mondsee lake. On the way was a house with a very evil-tempered bulldog—the terror, so we heard later, of every person and dog who happened to pass by. This bulldog immediately flew at Tasso. Its luck however was completely out. In a

flash it was lying on the ground, and its last hour might well have come, had not Tasso, obedient to our whistle, released his hold. The vanquished bulldog was a pitiful sight as it slunk away, cowed, bewildered and streaming with blood.

But we did not call Tasso off from his fight with the Newfoundland Moran. One day the two rivals, whom our care and caution had kept apart so long, by chance came suddenly face to face. The fateful moment had arrived. We knew instinctively that there was no other course for them except to fight it out. Then and only then might there at last be peace between them. And there was peace.

On this occasion too Tasso wasn't the attacker. He stood still, gazing mildly at the Newfoundland and shyly wagging his tail. The way he wagged his tail had something about it that moved us deeply: it signified his goodwill, his desire to be conciliatory, a last faint hope that a fight might yet be avoided. And the eloquent tail, which thus spoke his offer of friendship, continued to wag until the very second when the enemy was upon him. Moran advanced slowly with a stiff gait, challengingly, threateningly, then like a flash sprang at Tasso's flank. The fight was as stupendous as a volcanic eruption. The women shrieked or broke into terror-stricken weeping as the two animals set about one another with boundless ferocity. It was too late, and no one would have dared, to attempt to separate them. It had to be a fight to the finish.

Like two wrestlers Tasso and Moran stood on their hind legs and placed their forepaws on one another's shoulders,

T A S S O

growling, snarling and barking furiously as they snapped. Already the blood was running in bright streams from Moran's long ears. He tried to defend himself, fighting pluckily, though by now he was no longer attacking; and when he tried once more to get at Tasso's throat it was only as a measure of defence. Tasso's impetuosity was magnificent and irresistible. A moment later Moran, lying on the ground, was exerting all his strength to escape from the savage fangs that snapped at him from above, shook him mercilessly and tried to take hold of him at the back of his neck. Then, when for a moment Tasso released him, Moran suddenly made off, crouching with tail between his legs, and ears drooping as if death itself were at his heels.

Tasso remained standing where he was, gazing after the retreating enemy. Then he shook himself and came over to us, a picture of meekness and friendliness, as if nothing had happened. Tasso thus proved, by allowing Moran to make good his escape instead of exploiting his victory, that he had no taste for mere quarrelling and brawling—as indeed he continued to prove whenever he met the Newfoundland subsequently. From that time the latter used to make himself very scarce as soon as he caught a glimpse of Tasso, who, of course, merely glanced round at the retreating figure and then turned away as if he were slightly bored.

One day we noticed that Tasso had a peculiar way of shaking his ears, and we sent for a vet, who had to come by boat and rail from a considerable distance. The man had the appearance of being not very clever but at least honest. He proved, however, to be very much too clever

and by no means honest, so far can one be deceived by appearances. He told us that Tasso was suffering from a lung and liver complaint and had only two months to live. He suggested that he should destroy Tasso and sell me a lovely St. Bernard which, as a consolation for Tasso's death, he would let me have very cheap. When I retorted that I preferred to wait two months until Tasso died a natural death the man produced a bottle of medicine from his pocket, handed it to me as he took his fee with the air of one who had well earned it, and prepared to depart. In answer to my inquiry, how he had known to bring just the right medicine, he replied very coolly that he had been quite sure beforehand about the trouble from which the dog was suffering. Well, both the vets and the village watering-places round the Attersee were, most of them at least, in a peculiar class of their own.

We decided to go to Vienna and take Tasso to its admirable hospital for animals. Within a few days he was entirely cured of his ear trouble and as sound as ever. His behaviour in the train was as exemplary as in the house, in the woods or anywhere else. He had the tact to accommodate himself to every situation without complaint or peevishness. He never made difficulties. He never ceased to be lovable. On our return journey, when we left the train at Ischl in order to drive through the Weissenbach woods to the Attersee, Tasso did not want to remain sitting with us in the carriage but jumped down and gave the woods, the meadows and the streams an enthusiastic welcome. Then with quiet happiness he hurried ahead of the horses until we reached the Berghof.

TASSO

At last there came a time when he had to leave us, but he did not make a fuss about it. In fact, if he had been obstinate or had showed any sign that he might pine for us we could never have brought ourselves to the point of letting him go. But if he had stayed with us he could scarcely have lived as long as he did, for the war had come, with the blockade, the ever-increasing shortage of food, the ration-cards and all the miseries which we had to suffer to the bitter end. It happened that just when things seemed at their worst a dear relative of ours, who came from the still well-supplied countryside of Bohemia, paid us a visit. She and Tasso were firm friends from the first moment of meeting. It was as if her visit was as much for Tasso's sake as for ours, and she was dearer to us on that account. She carried on long conversations with Tasso and eventually invited him to go back with her to Bohemia. "I've everything you'll need, my fine fellow," she said. "You'll be able to eat to your heart's content." Tasso was sitting in front of her, one paw on her shoulder, looking straight into her eyes and listening as if he understood every word. So at last we had to part, but let us pass over that quickly. In those days there were things even sadder and harder to bear than parting from a dog.

A year or two later we paid a visit to Bohemia and saw Tasso again. The way he received us was wonderful. To no other friend in the world, even the dearest, could he have shown by a welcome so frank and unhesitating, so stormy and so devoted, that he was overjoyed in the reunion. He simply refused to leave us, sat beside us with his head upon our knees or his paw upon our shoulder. He

was all affection and tenderness—there are no other words for it. For him life in Bohemia was passing much more comfortably than it could have done with us in Austria. He had plenty of exercise, accompanying his master on the long walk to the factory. He was properly groomed, and even pampered. He was devoted to his new friends, but he had not ceased, after all that time, to be our true friend too.

His character, we were told, had but a single blemish. No doubt it had always been there, dormant but now at length roused. He couldn't, in fine, resist the sight of a white hen. No sooner did he set eyes on one, two, or three, or however many it might be, than he was off like a flash to throttle it, or them. Then, in the latter case, he laid them carefully in a row, one beside the other, sat down in front of them . . . and laughed. No one could be angry with him, so disarmingly hearty was his laugh.

Yet a second time we were in Bohemia, two or three years later, and saw Tasso once more. He gave vent to his delight just as stormily and tenderly as before. But he seemed, somehow, to be mellowed, and, though one could barely notice it, thinner. The approach of old age was reflected in the touching expression of his lovely and eloquent eyes. He had given up taking long walks, though there was one particular duty which he still fulfilled. The key of the garden gate hung from his collar, and when the gate-bell sounded Tasso heard it, wherever he might be. He bounded down the path and held the key against the bars unless the caller were a stranger, when, instead, he barked loudly for someone to come and open the gate.

T A S S O

There was one man—I can't now recall whether he was the gardener or one of the servants—with whom Tasso refused to have any dealings. If this man happened to be at the gate Tasso merely glanced at him, turned away without barking, and left him standing there. The man must have known why.

Now Tasso is dead. He had become old and feeble. His deep, powerful voice had lost its resonance, and he could only just see out of one eye. A few days ago a quick and kind end was prepared for him. We mourn him as a friend whose unfailing devotion has warmed and brightened our existence. He deserves his little epitaph as only the true-hearted can deserve it. He was a great character, constant in love as in hate, sweet-tempered, trusting, and in everything a source of joy. His life was pure and quickened by a devotion that asked nothing in return. Always he gave more, far more, than he received. Few and rare are the men of whom such praise can be spoken.

Translated by NORMAN GULLICK.

BY
ERNEST THOMPSON SETON



LOBO : THE KING OF CURRUMPAW

Currumpaw is a vast cattle range in northern New Mexico. It is a land of rich pastures and teeming flocks and herds, a land of rolling mesas and precious running waters that at length unite in the Currumpaw River, from which the whole region is named. And the king whose despotic power was felt over its entire extent was an old grey wolf.

Old Lobo, or the king, as the Mexicans called him, was the gigantic leader of a remarkable pack of grey wolves, that had ravaged the Currumpaw Valley for a number of years. All the shepherds and ranchmen knew him well, and, wherever he appeared with his trusty band, terror reigned supreme among the cattle, and wrath and despair among their owners. Old Lobo was a giant among wolves, and was cunning and strong in proportion to his size. His voice at night was well known and easily distinguished from that of any of his fellows. An ordinary wolf might howl half the night about the herdsman's bivouac without attracting more than a passing notice, but when the deep roar of the old king came booming down the canyon, the

LOBO: THE KING OF CURRUPAW
watcher bestirred himself and prepared to learn in the morning that fresh and serious inroads had been made.

Old Lobo's band was but a small one. This I never quite understood, for usually, when a wolf rises to the position and power that he had, he attracts a numerous following. It may be that he had as many as he desired, or perhaps his ferocious temper prevented the increase of his pack. Certain is it that Lobo had only five followers during the latter part of his reign. Each of these, however, was a wolf of renown; most of them were above the ordinary size—one in particular, the second in command, was a veritable giant—but even he was far below the leader in size and prowess. Several of the band, besides the two leaders, were especially noted. One of those was a beautiful white wolf that the Mexicans called Blanca; this was supposed to be a female, possibly Lobo's mate. Another was a yellow wolf of remarkable swiftness, which according to current stories had, on several occasions, captured an antelope for the pack.

It will be seen, then, that these wolves were thoroughly well known to the cowboys and shepherds. They were frequently seen and oftener heard, and their lives were intimately associated with those of the cattlemen, who would so gladly have destroyed them. There was not a stockman on the Currumpaw who would not readily have given the value of many steers for the scalp of any one of Lobo's band, but they seemed to possess charmed lives, and defied all manner of devices to kill them. They scorned all hunters, derided all poisons and continued, for at least five years, to exact their tribute from the Currum-

paw ranchers to the extent, many said, of a cow each day. According to this estimate, therefore, the band had killed more than two thousand of the finest stock, for, as was only too well known, they selected the best in every instance.

The old idea that a wolf was constantly in a starving state, and therefore ready to eat anything, was as far as possible from the truth in this case, for these freebooters were always sleek and well-conditioned, and were, in fact, most fastidious about what they ate. Any animal that had died from natural causes, or that was diseased or tainted, they would not touch, and they even rejected anything that had been killed by the stockmen. Their choice and daily food was the tenderer part of a freshly killed yearling heifer. An old bull or cow they disdained, and though they occasionally took a young calf or colt, it was quite clear that veal or horseflesh was not their favourite diet. It was also known that they were not fond of mutton, although they often amused themselves by killing sheep. One night in November, 1893, Blanca and the yellow wolf killed two hundred and fifty sheep, apparently for the fun of it, and did not eat an ounce of their flesh.

These are examples of many stories which I might repeat, and show the ravages of this destructive band. Many new devices for their extinction were tried each year, but still they lived and thrived in spite of all the efforts of their foes. A great price was set on Lobo's head, and in consequence poison in a score of subtle forms was put out for him, but he never failed to detect and avoid it. One thing only he feared—that was firearms; and know-

LOBO: THE KING OF CURRUPAW
ing full well that all men in this region carried them, he never was known to attack or face a human being. Indeed, the set policy of his band was to take refuge in flight whenever, in the daytime, a man was descried, no matter at what distance. Lobo's habit of permitting the pack to eat only that which they themselves had killed, was in numerous cases their salvation, and the keenness of his scent to detect the taint of human hands or the poison itself, completed their immunity.

On one occasion, one of the cowboys heard the too familiar rallying-cry of Old Lobo, and, stealthily approaching, he found the Currumpaw pack in a hollow, where they had "rounded up" a small herd of cattle. Lobo sat apart on a knoll, while Blanca with the rest was endeavouring to "cut out" a young cow, which they had selected; but the cattle were standing in a compact mass with their heads outward, and presented to the foe a line of horns, unbroken save when some cow, frightened by a fresh onset of the wolves, tried to retreat into the middle of the herd. It was only by taking advantage of these breaks that the wolves had succeeded at all in wounding the selected cow, but she was far from being disabled, and it seemed that Lobo at length lost patience with his followers, for he left his position on the hill, and, uttering a deep roar, dashed towards the herd. The terrified rank broke at his charge, and he sprang in among them. Then the cattle scattered like the pieces of a bursting bomb. Away went the chosen victim, but ere she had gone twenty-five yards Lobo was upon her. Seizing her by the neck he suddenly held back with all his force and so threw

her heavily to the ground. The shock must have been tremendous, for the heifer was thrown heels over head. Lobo also turned a somersault, but immediately recovered himself, and his followers, falling on the poor cow, killed her in a few seconds. Lobo took no part in the killing—after having thrown the victim, he seemed to say, “Now why could not some of you have done that at once without wasting so much time?”

The man now rode up shouting, the wolves as usual retired, and he, having a bottle of strychnine, quickly poisoned the carcass in three places, then went away, knowing they would return to feed, as they had killed the animal themselves. But the next morning, on going to look for his expected victims, he found that although the wolves had eaten the heifer, they had carefully cut out and thrown aside all those parts that had been poisoned.

The dread of this great wolf spread yearly among the ranchmen, and each year a larger price was set on his head, until at last it reached \$1000, an unparalleled wolf-bounty, surely; many a good man has been hunted down for less. Tempted by the promised reward, a Texan ranger named Tannerey came one day galloping up the canyon of the Currumpaw. He had a superb outfit for wolf-hunting—the best of guns and horses, and a pack of enormous wolf-hounds. Far out on the plains of the Panhandle, he and his dogs had killed many a wolf, and now he never doubted that within a few days Old Lobo’s scalp would dangle at his saddle-bow.

Away they went bravely on their hunt in the grey dawn of a summer morning, and soon the great dogs gave joy-

LOBO: THE KING OF CURRUPAW
ous tongue to say that they were already on the track of their quarry. Within two miles, the grizzly band of Currumpaw leaped into view, and the chase grew fast and furious. The part of the wolf-hounds was merely to hold the wolves at bay till the hunter could ride up and shoot them, and this usually was easy on the open plains of Texas; but here a new feature of the country came into play, and showed how well Lobo had chosen his range; for the rocky canyons of the Currumpaw and its tributaries intersect the prairies in every direction. The old wolf at once made for the nearest of these and by crossing it got rid of the horsemen. His band then scattered and thereby scattered the dogs, and when they reunited at a distant point of course all of the dogs did not turn up, and the wolves, no longer outnumbered, turned on their pursuers and killed or desperately wounded them all. That night when Tannerey mustered his dogs, only six of them returned, and of these two were terribly lacerated. This hunter made two other attempts to capture the royal scalp, but neither of them was more successful than the first, and on the last occasion his best horse met its death by a fall; so he gave up the chase in disgust and went back to Texas, leaving Lobo more than ever the despot of the region.

Next year, two other hunters appeared, determined to win the promised bounty. Each believed he could destroy this noted wolf, the first by means of a newly devised poison, which was to be laid out in an entirely new manner; the other a French-Canadian, by poison assisted with certain spells and charms, for he firmly believed that Lobo

was a veritable "loup-garou", and could not be killed by ordinary means. But cunningly compounded poisons, charms, and incantations were all of no avail against this grizzly devastator. He made his weekly rounds and daily banquets as aforetime, and before many weeks had passed, Calone and Laloche gave up in despair and went elsewhere to hunt.

In the spring of 1893, after his unsuccessful attempt to capture Lobo, Joe Calone had a humiliating experience, which seems to show that the big wolf simply scorned his enemies, and had absolute confidence in himself. Calone's farm was on a small tributary of the Currumpaw, in a picturesque canyon, and among the rocks of this very canyon, within a thousand yards of the house, Old Lobo and his mate selected their den and raised their family that season. There they lived all summer, and killed Joe's cattle, sheep, and dogs, but laughed at all his poisons and traps, and rested securely among the recesses of the cavernous cliffs, while Joe vainly racked his brain for some method of smoking them out, or of reaching them with dynamite. But they escaped entirely unscathed, and continued their ravages as before. "There's where he lived all last summer," said Joe, pointing to the face of the cliff, "and I couldn't do a thing with him. I was like a fool to him."

This history, gathered so far from the cowboys, I found hard to believe until, in the fall of 1893, I made the acquaintance of the wily marauder, and at length came to know him more thoroughly than anyone else. Some years before, in the Bingo days, I had been a wolf-hunter, but

LOBO: THE KING OF CURRUMPAW

my occupations since then had been of another sort, chaining me to stool and desk. I was much in need of a change, and when a friend, who was also a ranch-owner on the Currumpaw, asked me to come to New Mexico and try if I could do anything with this predatory pack, I accepted the invitation and, eager to make the acquaintance of its king, was as soon as possible among the mesas of that region. I spent some time riding about to learn the country, and at intervals my guide would point to the skeleton of a cow to which the hide still adhered, and remark, "That's some of his work."

It became quite clear to me that, in this rough country, it was useless to think of pursuing Lobo with hounds and horses, so that poison or traps were the only available expedients. At present we had no traps large enough, so I set to work with poison.

I need not enter into the details of a hundred devices that I employed to circumvent this "loup-garou"; there was no combination of strychnine, arsenic, cyanide, or prussic acid, that I did not essay; there was no manner of flesh that I did not try as bait; but morning after morning, as I rode forth to learn the result, I found that all my efforts had been useless. The old king was too cunning for me. A single instance will show his wonderful sagacity. Acting on the hint of an old trapper, I melted some cheese together with the kidney fat of a freshly killed heifer, stewing it in a china dish, and cutting it with a bone knife to avoid the taint of metal. When the mixture was cool, I cut it into lumps, and, making a hole in one side of each lump, I inserted a large dose of strychnine and cyanide,

contained in a capsule that was impermeable by any odour; finally I sealed the holes up with pieces of the cheese itself. During the whole process, I wore a pair of gloves steeped in the hot blood of the heifer, and even avoided breathing on the baits. When all was ready, I put them in a rawhide bag rubbed all over with blood, and rode forth dragging the liver and kidneys of the beef at the end of a rope. With this I made a ten-mile circuit, dropping a bait at each quarter of a mile, and taking the utmost care, always, not to touch any with my hands.

Lobo, generally, came into this part of the range in the early part of each week, and passed the latter part, it was supposed, around the base of Sierra Grande. This was Monday, and that same evening, as we were about to retire, I heard the deep bass howl of his majesty. On hearing it one of the boys briefly remarked, "There he is; we'll see."

The next morning I went forth, eager to know the result. I soon came on the fresh trail of the robbers, with Lobo in the lead—his track was always easily distinguished. An ordinary wolf's forefoot is $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, that of a large wolf $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches, but Lobo's, as measured a number of times, was $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches from claw to heel; I afterwards found that his other proportions were commensurate, for he stood three feet high at the shoulder, and weighed 150 pounds. His trail, therefore, though obscured by those of followers, was never difficult to trace. The pack had soon found the track of my drag, and as usual followed it. I could see that Lobo had come to the first bait, sniffed about it, and finally had picked it up.

LOBO: THE KING OF CURRUMPAW

Then I could not conceal my delight. "I've got him at last," I exclaimed; "I shall find him stark within a mile," and I galloped on with eager eyes fixed on the great broad track in the dust. It led me to the second bait and that also was gone. How I exulted—I surely have him now and perhaps several of his band. But there was the broad paw-mark still on the drag; and though I stood in the stirrup and scanned the plain I saw nothing that looked like a dead wolf. Again I followed—to find now that the third bait was gone—and the king-wolf's track led on to the fourth—there to learn that he had not really taken a bait at all, but had merely carried them in his mouth. Then, having piled the three on the fourth, he scattered filth over them to express his utter contempt for my devices. After this he left my drag and went about his business with the pack he guarded so effectively.

This is only one of many similar experiences which convinced me that poison would never avail to destroy this robber, and though I continued to use it while awaiting the arrival of the traps, it was only because it was meanwhile a sure means of killing many prairie wolves and other destructive vermin.

About this time there came under my observation an incident that will illustrate Lobo's diabolic cunning. These wolves had at least one pursuit which was merely an amusement, it was stampeding and killing sheep, though they rarely ate them. The sheep are usually kept in flocks of from one thousand to three thousand under one or more shepherds. At night they are gathered in the most sheltered place available, and a herdsman sleeps on each

side of the flock to give additional protection. Sheep are such senseless creatures that they are liable to be stampeded by the veriest trifle, but they have deeply ingrained in their nature one, and perhaps only one, strong weakness, namely, to follow their leader. And this the shepherds turn to good account by putting half a dozen goats in the flock of sheep. The latter recognize the superior intelligence of their bearded cousins, and when a night alarm occurs they crowd around them, and usually are thus saved from a stampede and are easily protected. But it was not always so. One night late in last November, two Perico shepherds were aroused by an onset of wolves. Their flocks huddled around the goats, which, being neither fools nor cowards, stood their ground and were bravely defiant; but alas for them, no common wolf was heading this attack. Old Lobo, the wer-wolf, knew as well as the shepherds that the goats were the moral force of the flock, so hastily running over the backs of the densely packed sheep, he fell on these leaders, slew them all in a few minutes, and soon had the luckless sheep stampeding in a thousand different directions. For weeks afterwards I was almost daily accosted by some anxious shepherd, who asked, "Have you seen any stray O T O sheep lately?" and usually I was obliged to say I had; one day it was, "Yes, I came on some five or six carcasses by Diamond Springs"; or another, it was to the effect that I had seen a small "bunch" running on the Malpai Mesa; or again, "No, but Juan Meira saw about twenty, freshly killed, on the Cedra Monte two days ago."

At length the wolf-traps arrived, and with two men I

LOBO: THE KING OF CURRUPAW
worked a whole week to get them properly set out. We spared no labour or pains, I adopted every device I could think of that might help to ensure success. The second day after the traps arrived, I rode around to inspect, and soon came upon Lobo's trail running from trap to trap. In the dust I could read the whole story of his doings that night. He had trotted along in the darkness, and although the traps were so carefully concealed, he had instantly detected the first one. Stopping the onward march of the pack, he had cautiously scratched around it until he had disclosed the trap, the chain, and the log, then left them wholly exposed to view with the trap still unsprung, and, passing on, he treated over a dozen traps in the same fashion. Very soon I noticed that he stopped and turned aside as soon as he detected suspicious signs on the trail, and a new plan to outwit him at once suggested itself. I set the traps in the form of an H; that is, with a row of traps on each side of the trail, and one on the trail for the cross-bar of the H. Before long, I had an opportunity to count another failure. Lobo came trotting along the trail, and was fairly between the parallel lines before he detected the single trap in the trail, but he stopped in time, and why or how he knew enough I cannot tell, the Angel of the wild things must have been with him, but without turning an inch to the right or left, he slowly and cautiously backed on his own tracks, putting each paw exactly in its old track until he was off the dangerous ground. Then returning at one side he scratched clods and stones with his hind feet till he had sprung every trap. This he did on many other occasions, and although I varied my methods and redoubled my

precautions, he was never deceived, his sagacity seemed never at fault, and he might have been pursuing his career of rapine to-day but for an unfortunate alliance that proved his ruin and added his name to the long list of heroes who, unassailable when alone, have fallen through the indiscretion of a trusted ally.

Once or twice, I had found indications that everything was not quite right in the Currumpaw pack. There were signs of irregularity, I thought; for instance there was clearly the trail of a smaller wolf running ahead of the leader at times, and this I could not understand until a cowboy made a remark which explained the matter.

"I saw them to-day," he said, "and the wild one that breaks away is Blanca." Then the truth dawned upon me, and I added, "Now, I know that Blanca is a she-wolf, because were a he-wolf to act thus, Lobo would kill him at once."

This suggested a new plan. I killed a heifer, and set one or two rather obvious traps about the carcass. Then cutting off the head, which is considered useless offal, and quite beneath the notice of a wolf, I set it a little apart, and around it placed two powerful steel traps properly deodorized and concealed with the utmost care. During my operations I kept my hands, boots, and implements smeared with fresh blood, and afterwards sprinkled the ground with the same, as though it had flowed from the head; and when the traps were buried in the dust I brushed the place over with the skin of a coyote, and with a foot of the same animal made a number of tracks over the traps. The

LOBO: THE KING OF CURRUMPAW

head was so placed that there was a narrow passage between it and some tussocks, and in this passage I buried two of my best traps, fastening them to the head itself.

Wolves have a habit of approaching every carcass they get the wind of, in order to examine it, even when they have no intention of eating it, and I hoped that this habit would bring the Currumpaw pack within reach of my latest stratagem. I did not doubt that Lobo would detect my handiwork about the meat, and prevent the pack approaching it, but I did build some hopes on the head, for it looked as though it had been thrown aside as useless.

Next morning, I sallied forth to inspect the traps, and there, oh, joy! were the tracks of the pack, and the place where the beef-head and its traps had been was empty. A hasty study of the trail showed that Lobo had kept the pack from approaching the meat, but one, a small wolf, had evidently gone on to examine the head as it lay apart and had walked right into one of the traps.

We set out on the trail, and within a mile discovered that the hapless wolf was Blanca. Away she went, however, at a gallop, and although encumbered by the beef-head, which weighed over fifty pounds, she speedily distanced my companion who was on foot. But we overtook her when she reached the rocks, for the horns of the cow's head became caught and held her fast. She was the handsomest wolf I had ever seen. Her coat was in perfect condition and nearly white.

She turned to fight, and raising her voice in the rallying cry of her race, sent a long howl rolling over the canyon. From far away upon the mesa came a deep response, the

cry of Old Lobo. That was her last call, for now we had closed in on her, and all her energy and breath were devoted to combat.

Then followed the inevitable tragedy, the idea of which I shrank from afterward more than at the time. We each threw a lasso over the neck of the doomed wolf, and strained our horses in opposite directions until the blood burst from her mouth, her eyes glazed, her limbs stiffened and then fell limp. Homeward then we rode, carrying the dead wolf, and exulting over this, the first death-blow we had been able to inflict on the Currumpaw pack.

At intervals during the tragedy, and afterward as we rode homeward, we heard the roar of Lobo as he wandered about on the distant mesas, where he seemed to be searching for Blanca. He had never really deserted her, but knowing that he could not save her, his deep-rooted dread of firearms had been too much for him when he saw us approaching. All that day we heard him wailing as he roamed in his quest, and I remarked at length to one of the boys, "Now, indeed, I truly know that Blanca was his mate."

As evening fell he seemed to be coming toward the home canyon, for his voice sounded continually nearer. There was an unmistakable note of sorrow in it now. It was no longer the loud, defiant howl, but a long, plaintive wail: "Blanca! Blanca!" he seemed to call. And as night came down, I noticed that he was not far from the place where we had overtaken her. At length he seemed to find the trail, and when he came to the spot where we had killed her, his heartbroken wailing was piteous to hear. It

LOBO: THE KING OF CURRUPAW was sadder than I could possibly have believed. Even the stolid cowboys noticed it, and said they had "never heard a wolf carry on like that before". He seemed to know exactly what had taken place, for her blood had stained the place of her death.

Then he took up the trail of the horses and followed it to the ranch-house. Whether in hopes of finding her there, or in the quest of revenge, I know not, but the latter was what he found, for he surprised our unfortunate watchdog outside and tore him to little bits within fifty yards of the door. He evidently came alone this time, for I found but one trail next morning, and he had galloped about in a reckless manner that was very unusual with him. I had half expected this, and had set a number of additional traps about the pasture. Afterward I found that he had indeed fallen into one of these, but such was his strength, he had torn himself loose and cast it aside.

I believed that he would continue in the neighbourhood until he found her body at least, so I concentrated all my energies on this one enterprise of catching him before he left the region, and while yet in this reckless mood. Then I realized what a mistake I had made in killing Blanca, for by using her as a decoy I might have secured him the next night.

I gathered in all the traps I could command, one hundred and thirty strong steel wolf-traps, and set them in fours in every trail that led into the canyon; each trap was separately fastened to a log, and each log was separately buried. In burying them, I carefully removed the sod, and every particle of earth that was lifted we put in blankets, so that

after the sod was replaced and all was finished the eye could detect no trace of human handiwork. When the traps were concealed I trailed the body of poor Blanca over each place, and made of it a drag that circled all about the ranch, and finally I took off one of her paws and made with it a line of tracks over each trap. Every precaution and device known to me I used, and retired at a late hour to await the result.

Once during the night I thought I heard Old Lobo, but was not sure of it. Next day I rode around, but darkness came on before I completed the circuit of the north canyon, and I had nothing to report. At supper one of the cowboys said, "There was a great row among the cattle in the north canyon this morning, maybe there is something in the traps there." It was afternoon of the next day before I got to the place referred to, and, as I drew near, a great grizzly form arose from the ground, vainly endeavouring to escape, and there revealed before me stood Lobo, King of the Currumpaw, firmly held in the traps. Poor old hero, he had never ceased to search for his darling, and when he found the trail her body had made he followed it recklessly, and so fell into the snare prepared for him. There he lay in the iron grasp of all four traps, perfectly helpless, and all around him were numerous tracks showing how the cattle had gathered about him to insult the fallen despot, without daring to approach within his reach. For two days and two nights he had lain there, and now was worn out with struggling. Yet, when I went near him, he rose up with bristling mane and raised his voice, and for the last time made the canyon reverberate with his deep

LOBO: THE KING OF CURRUPAW

bass roar, a call for help, the muster call of his band. But there was none to answer him, and, left alone in his extremity, he whirled about with all his strength and made a desperate effort to get at me. All in vain, each trap was a dead drag of over three hundred pounds, and in their relentless fourfold grasp, with great steel jaws on every foot, and the heavy logs and chains all entangled together, he was absolutely powerless. How his huge ivory tusks did grind on those cruel chains, and when I ventured to touch him with my rifle barrel he left grooves on it which are there to this day. His eyes glared green with hate and fury, and his jaws snapped with a hollow "chop", as he vainly endeavoured to reach me and my trembling horse. But he was worn out with hunger and struggling and loss of blood, and he soon sank exhausted to the ground.

Something like compunction came over me, as I prepared to deal out to him that which so many had suffered at his hands.

"Grand old outlaw, hero of a thousand lawless raids, in a few minutes you will be but a great load of carrion. It cannot be otherwise." Then I swung my lasso and sent it whistling over his head. But not so fast; he was yet far from being subdued, and, before the supple coils had fallen on his neck, he seized the noose and, with one fierce chop, cut through its hard thick strands, and dropped it in two pieces at his feet.

Of course I had my rifle as a last resource, but I did not wish to spoil his royal hide, so I galloped back to the camp and returned with a cowboy and a fresh lasso. We threw to our victim a stick of wood which he seized in his teeth,

and before he could relinquish it our lassos whistled through the air and tightened on his neck.

Yet, before the light had died from his fierce eyes, I cried, "Stay, we will not kill him; let us take him alive to the camp." He was so completely powerless now that it was easy to put a stout stick through his mouth, behind his tusks, and then lash his jaws with a heavy cord which was also fastened to the stick. The stick kept the cord in, and the cord kept the stick in, so he was harmless. As soon as he felt his jaws were tied he made no further resistance, and uttered no sound, but looked calmly at us and seemed to say: "Well, you have got me at last, do as you please with me." And from that time he took no more notice of us.

We tied his feet securely, but he never groaned nor growled, nor turned his head. Then with our united strength we were just able to put him on my horse. His breath came evenly as though sleeping, and his eyes were bright and clear again but did not rest on us. Afar on the great rolling mesas they were fixed, his passing kingdom, where his famous band was now scattered. And he gazed till the pony descended the pathway into the canyon, and the rocks cut off the view.

By travelling slowly we reached the ranch in safety, and after securing him with a collar and a strong chain, we staked him out in the pasture and removed the cords. Then for the first time I could examine him closely, and proved how unreliable is vulgar report when a living hero or tyrant is concerned. He had *not* a collar of gold about his neck, nor was there on his shoulders an inverted cross to

LOBO: THE KING OF CURRUMPAW

denote that he had leagued himself with Satan. But I did find on one haunch a great broad scar that tradition says was the fang-mark of Juno, the leader of Tannerey's wolf-hounds—a mark which she gave him the moment before he stretched her lifeless on the sand of the canyon.

I set meat and water beside him, but he paid no heed. He lay calmly on his breast, and gazed with those steadfast yellow eyes away past me, down through the gateway of the canyon, over the open plains—his plains—nor moved a muscle when I touched him. When the sun went down he was still gazing fixedly across the prairie. I expected he would call up his band when night came, and prepared for them, but he had called once in his extremity, and none had come; he would never call again.

A lion shorn of his strength, an eagle robbed of his freedom, or a dove bereft of his mate, all die, it is said, of a broken heart; and who will aver that this grim bandit could bear the threefold brunt heart-whole? This only I know, that when the morning dawned he was lying there still in his position of calm repose, his body unwounded, but his spirit was gone—the old King-wolf was dead.

I took the chain from his neck, a cowboy helped me to carry him to the shed where lay the remains of Blanca, and, as we laid him beside her, the cattleman exclaimed: "There, you *would* come to her, now you are together again."

BY
G. B. STERN



TOES UNMASKED

Golden Toes, the big walnut-coloured spaniel, saw no reason to move away from his comfortable lethargy in the overgrown onion-bed, when the Legs came up to the kennels. He gathered from what they said—among themselves, of course, not to him—that they purposed making their final selection of the black spaniel puppy they would keep from the remaining three of Renny's litter of seven. Two of them had died, and two had already disappeared from La Lucccola, the little butter-yellow villa on a hill overlooking the Italian Mediterranean. Here Boris and Tessa, sometimes known as Big and Little Wolf, and the spaniels, Renny, Toes, and Poppit, happily passed their restless days, and their nights warm with dreams and whimpering starts and twitchings and regular heavy breathing.

Renny did not bother to be present during the ceremony of choosing which puppy was to remain with her. She said she knew that she could leave that sort of minor detail with every confidence to the Legs-in-Authority. She said that goodness knows she had had more than

TOES UNMASKED

enough of the puppies during that wearisome month when she had been always shut up with them. She said that one daughter was very like another, after all. She said that it was far more important to discover the whereabouts of that tantalizing hedgehog smell which lured her so often to the hollow roots of an old olive tree some quarter of a mile distant up the silvery slopes; so off she trotted, looking very brown and busy, and, as the Equestrian-Legs would say, every inch of her a little sport.

But Toes, her eldest son by her first husband, the late Doctor Watson, was curiously interested in the trio: silky black, flop ears, incredibly wise and pleading eyes. They were so like himself, and yet so utterly different. He had always felt that there was something very special about them; and now the fragments of talk which reached him from the Legs, who were bending absorbed faces above first one and then another of the puppies, confirmed this feeling.

"No, not Chloe! Chloe's got some white hairs on her chest—look!"

"Can't we keep Tulip? Tulip's the handsomest. She's by far the biggest, too."

"She's got such a stupid face, and her nose is too long. Besides, I don't like these great heavy spaniels."

Toes did not wince. He very rarely betrayed any surface emotion. Besides, he knew that he was huge and clumsy, with enormous golden paws, and wise bulges of dewlap. "Your one beauty", Renny said to him over and over again, "is your colour. And even then, most Legs

admire a quiet brown more than that loud blaze of russet." Renny, since her romance with the famous Dark Gentleman of San Remo, had lost all her previous humility, and made the others suffer a great deal by being both a bore and conceited, instead of merely a bore, as of old.

"I don't like these great heavy spaniels," repeated the tactless Legs-in-Authority, and Toes dropped his head nearer the ground and took a deep breath of onion.

"I vote we keep this one."

"Why, she's the smallest!"

"I know, but she's by far the prettiest, and she's so game! Do you know, this morning I found her with a bone twice her size, sitting in the armchair, spitting and growling like a little fury, defending it from Boris and Tessa!"

"She'd no right to be in the armchair," argued the Shapely-Legs, promptly. Toes was conscious of a swift fellow-feeling for the smallest of the black puppies. He sometimes sat in armchairs himself, but the Legs always made a fuss; though he could occasionally avert a scolding by rolling over clumsily on to his back, opening his mouth wide, and dabbing with all four paws at the air. He had discovered that when he accentuated his natural tendency to chunkiness and unwieldy gambolling, it always worked out, in some odd way, to his advantage. So that he had become very much the good-natured clown in the circus of Luceola dogs, and was content, in his philosophy, that it should be so; for to try to be otherwise than what you are, leaves you too little time for meditation.

TOES UNMASKED

Apparently the Legs, after some more wrangling, had definitely fixed on the smallest, liveliest, and prettiest of the puppies, and had named her Ossie—after a Hungarian dancer, they said, and because of her prowess in defending her bones. Already, with that strong sense of property that is rampant in every Legs, they were talking of her as though she were something marvellous in dog-flesh. Her points and breeding were discussed, and her ancestry; and then, prophetically, her future. They had never talked of Toes like this, nor of Poppit, poor little Poppit, the runt of the Doctor Watson litter, so small and old-fashioned and feeble.

“Renny’s quite a good little cocker in her way, you know, though of course Leander was streets ahead of her, with a pedigree as long as my arm. I saw it when I went over to fetch him, that time. It was awfully decent of the Petersons to lend him. If Ossie is anything like her father . . .”

“Queer, isn’t it, that they should all have been black? Such jet black, too. All Leander, and not a streak of Renny in any of them, to look at. I shall wait till Ossie’s a year old, and then I’ll show her at Genoa. She ought to carry off a first.”

They bore Ossie away into the house, petting and caressing her. In passing, the Shapely-Legs gave Toes an affectionate prod in his massive ribs. “Darling fat old stupid!” she said. Toes wagged his short plumed tail, and looked upwards with unutterable longing and idiocy.

Tulip and Chloe, now that their banishment from La

Luceola had been definitely pronounced, had already ceased, somehow, to exist; but little black Ossie, with her rippling ears and soft yet brilliant amber eyes, her short dewy nose, her winsome face and high spirits, her breeding and her fearlessness—Ossie, sole remaining daughter of the famous Dark Gentleman, was the eighth wonder of the world!

Toes, Golden Toes, slowly scrambled to his paws, and lurched forward a few paces to where the onions grew like a grotesque white and green forest, shimmering into mysterious bluish balls on top of each tall stem. The patch had been neglected owing to a quarrel between Savoury-Legs, the gardener, and the Italian-Retainer-Legs, who was the cook. There, shielded alike from heat and importunity, Toes flopped down again, and lay spatchcock, his back legs in a curiously symmetrical pattern, stretched out flat behind him. He always lay spatchcock when he wanted to reflect.

It was aristocratic to be black, if you were a spaniel. A touch of divinity, like the sheen on a black pearl, lay athwart little Ossie's shining ebony. Brown spaniels were common. Watson had been brown, and Renny, and Poppit, and, of course, himself; all different browns, but brown. But Renny's seven coal-black puppies—Toes had never seen any spaniel like them, except one!

Except one. Yes, he could remember dimly, lifting his mind backwards across what seemed like a great abyss of time, that wildly exciting moment when the Dark Gentleman had been brought by the Legs to La Luceola, and was admitted, again by the Legs, to Renny's

TOES UNMASKED

presence, where she fumed and whimpered behind the door of the goat-shed.

Long ago, in the spring. . . . And now here was June, and here were the puppies, Renny's puppies, and they were black, too; not, like Renny, brown; but black, like the black spaniel from San Remo, who had loved Renny.

And suddenly revelation came to Toes. He *knew*, and the knowledge was like a hot wriggle of light through his whole being.

Cause and effect. . . . Love and birth. . . . It was because the Dark Gentleman had once upon a time come to La Luceola, that Renny's puppies were born black. Toes understood now, and all the world seemed more tightly drawn together, strand upon strand, link after glowing link. He had discovered the secret, and he was one now with the hot earth that pushed up the onions to a jungle high above his head; with the tiny scurrying beetles so close to his benevolent nose. And he was glad, because of this new feeling of power that made him strong. And most of all glad because he recognized that he was a rare dog who could keep secrets, and would not want to rush about, barking and scattering them for all the other dogs to hear.

He thought again, and tenderly, of Ossie. Perhaps one day, not yet, but one day, now that he understood . . .

Supposing by a miracle of Dog—and Toes trembled a little—supposing his own son could be a shining silky black puppy? If he remained humble, and did not let himself become a proud Toes because he had guessed

the world's secret, nor strut around as though it were a secret invented and perfected by him. . . .

Supposing . . .

Why not?

Golden Toes sank his head on to his paws with a sigh. He felt exhausted now, but strangely peaceful; and in spite of being tired, so much more alive than he had ever been before. He heard Boris barking his name aloud, but he did not care to answer. Presently Boris discovered him, and smashed a way through the onion stems, leaving several bent and broken behind him.

"So there you are!" remarked Boris, chummily. "Hot, isn't it? What are you thinking about?"

Toes paused for several seconds before he definitely decided what he ought to have been thinking about.

"Biscuits," he said at last, "and duty."

Boris nodded approval. Biscuits and Duty. The right sort of things. Toes was sound, not a doubt of it.

Ossie had a very happy puppyhood at La Lucceola; a nature less sweet than hers might, indeed, have been spoilt by the aura of extra petting and cherishing with which the Legs surrounded her. So confident was she of her privileged welcome in the sitting-room, even when wet, that she used to dance in sideways, scramble into the nearest lap, and thrust up her impudent shiny little black muzzle to be kissed, without the slightest fear that it might be rudely pushed away.

The other dogs were most of them too big for her to play with, though they regarded her indulgently and

TOES UNMASKED

without jealousy; so she passed long hours sitting in the kennel of poor little Poppit, her delicate half-sister, who had never grown up properly, and was now unmistakably in a decline.

Ossie was never bored with Poppit, even through the long moral tales that all ended with admonitions to be good and docile and obedient, and to put others first. There was one thing which Poppit seemed to have particularly on her mind, and that was the sad condition of Savoury-Legs, the gardener, who, alas, drank too much wine, and drank too much wine much too often; and squandered his earnings, and what ought to have been his savings, on wine; and then was heard singing at night, round and round and round the moon-washed villa, in ever-widening circles.

"We must not condemn him," quoth Poppit to Ossie, "but pity him for his weakness. Indeed, my little sister, I feel sure that a good bitch's love might work wonders. I—nay, do not weep—shall not be with you long. Every night the dog-star shines a little brighter for me. But to you, Ossie, I leave this solemn charge: Love Savoury-Legs, and do what you can to win him from his weakness." And Ossie faithfully promised.

Poppit lingered on until August, and then passed away. By this time the Legs had already been in England for a month, and were not expected to return home from their holiday until the end of September. Boris felt their absence more than any of the other dogs. He was very dependent on their companionship; and even the friend of the Legs-in-Authority, the Substitute-Legs, who mean-

while inhabited La Lucceola, doing what was vaguely known as "seeing to things", could not wholly rouse the Big Wolf from his state of luscious and rather resentful melancholy.

Three months. A whole quarter of a year; an enormous weight of time by dog-reckoning. And then at last came one marvellous evening, when the moon hung low and red, like the very soul of tomato, between misty sky and dull-blue sea, and the sound of wheels rumbled up the curving road, and the flash of a carriage-lamp shone at the foot of the steep garden path, and a voice that was like none other in the world, the voice of the Legs-in-Authority, called out: "Boris, Boris, Boris! Toes, Renny, Boris, Tessa! Boris, Boris, Boris, *Boris!*" And other voices blended in: "Boris! Ossie, Ossie, Ossie! I *am* curious to see Ossie, aren't you? *Darling* Boris! Good old Toes!" to the ecstatic prancing shapes of wolf and spaniel that swarmed round their knees, and leapt at their chests.

Ossie, by some mischance, had been left behind, shut into the dining-room when the others had raced out.

"Where's Ossie?" cried the expectant Legs, bursting into the hall. The Italian-Retainer-Legs had lit up the house brilliantly in honour of the arrival. Ossie was scratching and barking on the other side of the dining-room door. Suddenly it was flung open for her. She hardly remembered the Legs, but she ran forward in a friendly fashion to greet them: "Won't they think I've grown big!"

Incredulous, horrified, the Legs gazed at her.

Ossie? Could this be Ossie? Could this odd and whippy

TOES UNMASKED

little dog-compendium really be the legatee of that pure-bred black spaniel, Leander? This—this small atrocity, whose legs were too long, whose coat was common and curly, whose head was too small and thin, none of whose separate parts seemed to fit together to make spaniel? This, the peerless Ossie?

What could have happened?

And the next day they were even more disgusted; for whereas the older dogs could hardly be persuaded to quit for one moment the company of their beloved Legs, Ossie pattered all day long a yard and a half behind Savoury-Legs, following him up the garden, and following him down the garden, to and fro among the artichokes, and back to the great rain-water barrel, in and out of the cantina where the straw flasks and great dummi-junni of wine were kept, up the path to feed the rabbits; wherever Savoury-Legs went, there Ossie went too, his faithful and adoring shadow.

“This dog,” said Savoury-Legs, who always delivered his few remarks with much pomp and pregnancy, well aware that they must be utterances worth hearing to the ignorant; “This dog is a *cagnia di razza*, a dog of race. She is the best and most beautiful of them all. She is also a sport-dog, and worth many soldi; and she is devoted to me—*io, io*,” and he indicated himself several times by pointing towards his own chest. Then, crying: “*Viene, La Pops!*” he strode away, and Ossie unhesitatingly followed.

The Legs looked at one another. “Well, he’d better have her, I think. After all, she’s not much good to us.”

So Ossie was given to Savoury-Legs, and became merely a gardener's dog. She did not mind her fall in the social status; for, urged primarily by the spirit of her little dead sister Poppit, she had by now genuinely become devoted to Savoury-Legs, and mingled less and less with the rougher dog-life at La Luceola. Perhaps in unconscious recognition, he always called her La Pops, never Ossie.

Savoury-Legs was indeed enormously proud of his possession of Ossie. Like Tocs, he, another of those simple souls to whom inspiration often comes more readily than to the sophisticated, had recognized in the black puppies a very special something, an importance, an aristocracy. The Legs had once told him what the pedigree father, Leander of San Remo, had originally cost; and Savoury-Legs, staggered and amazed, had worked it out to enough *soldi* to make him drunk on every festa and Sunday, and three times a month, for two and a half years. "Body of Bacchus!" he exclaimed respectfully. And then, too, Ossie had the mysterious merit of being "English", the style of well-bred dog that the English milords took about with them for the sport, so the legend ran. Oh, she was undoubtedly a *cagnia di razza*!

And behind the glamour, and in addition to it, was the pleasant fact that she had looks which Savoury-Legs could, without any highbrow effort, admire heartily: the crimp in her coat, her high, quick, thin black legs resulting in a figure so much more admirable than the low-slung bodies of Renny or Tocs. Savoury-Legs began

TOES UNMASKED

to tell himself stories about this nearly strange Savoury-Legs who was the owner of La Pops. If one possessed an English milord's dog, then one must be worthy of it: live up to the dignity, shave perhaps more often. . . .

Drink, perhaps, less often.

"Have you noticed," Boris remarked to the others, after several days of the usual November rain had fallen on the parched and cracking earth, "that Savoury-Legs hasn't been singing round the place at nights, as he used to?"

"I haven't heard him for weeks, now I come to think of it," Toes agreed. "And he usually has an awful bout after a spell of rain, because there's nothing else for him to do."

"I don't blame him," said Tessa. "This weather gets on my nerves so, I could take to drink myself; I like it."

Boris smiled indulgently on his refractory mate.

"Come! Come! How can you know if you like it or not?"

"I do know," Tessa darted back at him. "The spaniels wouldn't, because they still sleep in the kennels. But you've seen how the Legs have pampered me lately, and given me the goat-shed to sleep in, and special straw and extra meals, and even allowed me on the divan? Good for Tessa, I say!"—with an impudent little prance. "Last night, when I was half asleep in my own apartment, the Legs came in with a large saucer of milk, and something in it that smelt rather like from Savoury-Legs' mouth, only different and nicer. They were half laughing, and rather excited to see what I'd do, and Shapely-Legs said:

'I do hope she'll lap it! A spot of brandy will keep the damp out; and of course, just now . . .' I haven't had much appetite lately," lied the Little Wolf, who every day gobbled up three times more than her usual share, and then hung about for extras. "So I smelt this, and then I smelt it again; and as I adore new sensations, I took the risk and tasted it. By Dog, it was glorious! I was through that saucerful like a streak, and then I rushed down after the Legs for more. It was like rushing on thin air, and the garden was pirouetting and zigzagging down the hill, and where the house stood there were two swaying houses, both bright pink! Yes, there were, Toes, you needn't argue—two! But I rushed between them into the dining-room, and the Legs were all drinking this glorious smell, out of big tulip-shaped glasses, and they weren't a bit angry; only amused. But though I begged and begged for more, they wouldn't give it to me—the beasts! So I went back to bed, and I won't tell any of you what I dreamt!"

Her dark oblique eyes mocked Boris, and defied him to enter her paradise—poor, slow Boris.

"Well, I never did!" Renny held up her paws in horror.

"No, *you* wouldn't!" laughed unrepentant Tessa. But then that heaviness of spirit which had been afflicting her lately, descended on her again. She sighed, and knowing that Renny was on the brink of a boring anecdote, tried to fall asleep before it had properly begun.

Renny said: "Last time Savoury-Legs came up in the morning rather the worse for liquor, and smelling dread-

TOES UNMASKED

fully stale, my dears, as Tessa said—I'm sensitive to smells—Last time, as I was saying, and it must have been—let me see, was it before or after the Legs came home? I believe before, because he hadn't put fresh straw in my kennel, and I was annoyed about it; for the one thing that I cannot and will not stand is neglect of our daily task. Well, as I was saying, when I found out that he'd been drinking—Toes, one side of your face is all caught up on your tooth again! It does give you such an odd, puffy appearance!”

“You do it yourself,” said Toes somnolently, lying spatchcock under the table; “and anyway, do remember that I'm not a puppy any more.”

Renny crooned, sentimentally: “You will always be a little puppy to me!”

Tessa groaned. She mistrusted Renny's maternal instinct; as well she might, considering how indecently soon Renny used to try and wriggle away from the importunities of her seven little blackamoors, and escape for long walks. “It's all show and nothing to it!” scoffed Tessa.

“... I just sat there”, Renny completed her anecdote triumphantly, “and I looked up at him so that he couldn't help seeing the deep reproach in my eyes; and I'm sure I made him thoroughly ashamed of himself, because from this moment to that—no, from that moment to this—he hasn't touched a drop!”

“It isn't you,” said Toes, briefly, but to the point. “It's Ossie!”

The other dogs looked rather offhand and casual.

They could not help slightly echoing the Legs' attitude towards Ossie—that she had rather let down the Luccola kennels. No harm in her, but she was only a gardener's dog.

"It's all very well," persisted Toes. "But there's a *lot* in Ossie."

"Talking of poor Ossie reminds me," Renny began again, "of a compliment that was paid to me when I was just about her age. It was on a Tuesday——"

Tessa got up, yawned, and walked out of the room—fortunately the doors were open—into the garden.

A little white village on the coast towards the east was suddenly suffused with an unearthly garnet glow, from a last valiant leap of sun between two purplish-black clouds over the mountains in the west. The rain had stopped, and all the puddles had caught fire. Perhaps it would be fine again tomorrow. With a little grunt of satisfaction, Tessa withdrew into her own private apartment, and cuddled down securely in the straw. . . .

The goat-shed where Tessa lay with her pups was dark, but not gloomy, for it was wrapped round so brilliantly with Italian sunshine that some of the gold pierced the odd-shaped chinks and slats in the roughly boarded walls, and lay in a soft pattern of burnished coins on the pale yellow straw. In a shadowy corner, a great truss of straw was piled up to the roof, ready for further use; and on a high shelf stood a pyramid of earthenware gardening pots, and these, too, the intruding sun-slants lit up here and there as though they were bright jagged bits of jewellery.

TOES UNMASKED

This warm shadowy little room had a tang of earth and wood, and the breath of milk and a furry cubsy smell of the jungle had crept in too; and there were small, comfortable sounds and squeaks of tumbling bodies, half-hidden in the rustle of the straw; and the sudden thump of Tessa's tail as she looked up with eyes that were softer and yet more radiant than they had ever been before, to greet the Legs trustfully, and to show off the fat little shapes, some silvery black, some fawn and grizzled silver like herself, huddled sleepily against her side. . . .

"Hush, she's quite all right. Come away, don't disturb her."

The narrow slit of doorway, discreetly opened, was closed again. Footsteps stole away. In the distance someone was calling the other dogs for a walk. Tessa heard them scampering past, but she did not care. How pleasant it was here, cut off and apart in her shrine among the sombre earth-coloured shadows, watching the gilding creep slowly over the straw, from south to west, and then fade and die away. Nice, alone here, where it was quiet and warm, and the dark air was like a protective cloak! *Nice*—for she was not wholly alone. And she moved her lithe body into a semi-circle, so that her cubs—blind eyes in a network of screwed-up black wrinkles, strong little paws pushing, pushing away for life—might crouch down and be warmer still.

Boris remarked to Toes: "Ossie looks slightly better than usual this morning."

This was a formula which Toes recognized. He had heard it before, about Renny and about Tessa; but when these two were in question, the other dogs had said: "How strangely beautiful Renny (or Tessa) is looking this morning."

Ossie was only the gardener's dog.

Golden Toes, in his latent and acute consciousness of a synthetic world, where nothing was haphazard nor separated, looked meditatively at Boris. . . . He was slightly alarmed, but this must not be betrayed, so he half shut his eyes, and waited for Boris to give himself away.

Boris fell heavily on the wall beside Toes. For this was his manner of lying down.

"Another time", the Big Wolf went on, amiably conversing as club-dogs do, "I might have considered a mild flirtation with the little thing. She really is not entirely devoid of charm, you know. I mean, really—" Again he waited for Toes to chime in, but the spaniel rested his square-cut dewlaps on his enormous and reliable paws, and only said:

"The Legs are having marrow-bones in the dining-room; and I think, I'm not sure, but I *think* that when they've done with them, they will bring a couple out here for us. I like eating out of doors, don't you?"

"Yes," said Boris. "*And* indoors." He watched the dining-room door with interest, but at the same time did not entirely abandon the subject of Ossie. "But I do feel very strongly, Toes, and I hope that one day you'll remember what I'm saying to you—I don't want to be a

TOES UNMASKED

bore and all that, nor treat you to a lecture, but there are some things a dog can't do, unless he's a cad. And I do feel that it's up to me to remain faithful to Tessa"—and Boris added with emphasis—"just at present", and tried to prick his lamentably floppy ears in the direction of the goat-shed.

"Quite," rumbled Toes gently, "quite, oh, quite! I mean, naturally. Of course, puppies are a tie. A great tie. Naturally. Yes."

"And the Legs tell me that they are *mine!*" Boris looked at Toes, and his eyes were wide open and incredulous. "Mine! Most gratifying." He howled a little, and cleared his throat.

Softly, under layers and layers of packed silence, Toes caressed his secret. "The Legs tell me that they are mine!" . . . And Boris, honest, simple dog that he was, just accepted the information. He did not know as Toes knew. Nor, seemingly, did Tessa know, for she growled as menacingly when Boris came near the goat-shed where she guarded her pups, as when Toes or any of the others sauntered by.

But Toes knew.

"Most gratifying!" Boris repeated. "But what I went through, over it all!" He was so engrossed in his topic that he did not notice the dining-room door open. "It will be an expense, of course; a heavy expense. The daughters can stay in the kennels and help their mother, but——"

"Help their mother do what?" asked Toes.

Boris looked vague, but was saved from reply by the

exquisite spectacle of a large juicy marrow-bone with plenty of meat still clinging to it, dropped directly beneath his nose. Toes was given a rather smaller bone.

"*Most gratifying!*" repeated Boris, for the third time, but it was doubtful now whether he referred to his family.

Golden Toes was moved by sudden mischief to suggest:

"If they're really yours, as the Legs say——"

"*If?*" Boris's tone was reproachful. "I accept the statement implicitly."

"Then of course you'll want to take them your bone? Paternal instinct, you know. Catering for the young and helpless."

Boris gazed at Toes, stricken. With so much conversation going on, he had only just got the bone into his mouth, and had not really tasted a particle of its savour as yet. But if such sacrifices were really expected of him——

All his life. Boris had put decency before greed. Slowly, reluctantly, he let his jaws fall apart. The bone dropped out and lay untasted on the wall.

"Oh, look here!" cried Toes, in a great hurry. He did not mind fun, but he could not bear to see the hero of his schooldog days involved in tragedy. "Eat it up, Boris, do. It's quite all right. Those puppies—they haven't got any teeth yet. They couldn't eat a bone even if you brought it to them." This was pure guess-work on his part, but it sounded plausible enough.

Boris heaved a great sigh of relief, and his eyes were a little humid as he gobbled his treasure.

"But I should have, you know," he murmured.

TOES UNMASKED

And Toes said warmly: "Of course you would!"

But presently, when he had got rid of Boris, he lumbered quietly up to the goat-shed, and, not heeding the menace of Tessa's furious growls and snappings, writhed into a low position where he could get one eye down to a hole in the boards. He could not see much, at first. Then presently he caught glimpses. . . .

Toes moved away, mightily reassured.

"Whatever is all the fuss about? Not one black puppy among them all! Just common grey and fawn grizzle. A few black streakings, but they don't count." And then, ruminating, he lay spatchcock, his nose pointed across the valley towards the opposite hill, where, amongst the smoky haze of olives, one aloof and sable cypress emphasized a tiny ruined stone hut beside it.

For several days Ossie was not seen at La Lucceola, and no faithful black shadow pattered up and down the garden after Savoury-Legs. The Legs-in-Authority had given instructions, and Savoury-Legs, a little in awe of his patrician piece of property, had eagerly signified his willingness to obey them. "She's too young, you see," the Legs had said.

But it was a pity, all the same, thought Savoury-Legs, as he strode home, sober, though it was wage-day, to his hut below the cypress-tree; a great pity! He was a sentimental man, and though there was no dog at La Lucceola, nay, nor in San Goffredo, nor indeed in all Italy, worthy to be the mate of his peerless La Pops—*cagnia di razza*, type of an English milord's sport-dog—yet princesses have been known to stoop to a *mésalliance* before now.

Well, at least, concluded Savoury-Legs, anticipating with pleasure his dinner of spaghetti, garlic, and hens' heads, at least he need not be *too* vigilant. For, after all, La Pops was his, his own, his treasure!

A few days after Tessa's puppies were born, the Legs were informed of a dog-show at Genoa, about an hour's journey away. If things had been otherwise, Tessa would undoubtedly have been exhibited. The splendid dogly Boris, for all his massive dignity, his noble white throat, the deep roll of his voice like a summons to battle, was yet not eligible to compete against the stern convention that the ears of a wolf-dog should be upright and pricked. That left Renny and Golden Toes, and the Legs decided at once, and without discussion, that of the two, Renny was the better spaniel, with the most chance of gaining glory.

"You see, Toes, old boy"—rolling him over on to his back, and prodding him, literally and spiritually, in all his vulnerable spots—"there isn't a class where they give a prize for huge paws! Otherwise, of course——" Toes lolled and gambolled and got in the way, and behaved as though it were all a great joke. "Good old Toes! You are a funny old thing!"

And then they went off with Renny on a lead, glossy, and beautifully brushed.

But first the Legs-in-Authority warned the Italian-Retainer-Legs to keep an eye on the dogs, that they did not stray out of the garden. For there had lately been a scare in San Goffredo. An Official-Legs was striding about, swooping on all dogs without muzzle or lead, and carry-

TOES UNMASKED

ing them off to captivity. There were rumours of heavy penalties: in some cases when a dog snapped at his captor, of blows, a shot from a gun. . . . The sort of legends that panic creates.

It was evening, blowing and raining, before the Legs returned again, with Renny and her first prize, and her enormous increase of vanity. Boris ran baying down the path to meet them, and was the first to hear the good news.

"My dear," said Renny strutting along beside him, gasping a little from the hill, "it was simply a roll-over!" And she gossiped about the show, and the class of dogs whom she had met there, and what the judges had said. Boris listened courteously, and rather regretted that he was so brave and reliable that he had had to be left behind to guard the house; for this was the tactful and solacing way in which the Legs had explained to him his omission from the party.

"Ah," quoth Renny, sadly shaking her head, "but if Ossie . . . If my hopes had not been so grievously disappointed in a certain direction that I won't name, there would have been two show-dogs, and two prizes at La Luceola!" And she added pensively: "A first and a second prize."

The Italian-Retainer-Legs, very perturbed and agitated, met them on the threshold. "Signore, il Toes. . . . You have not by chance seen him on the way? We have been calling and calling—*Dio mio!*—for two, three hours now he is missing! That one there in the town with the whip and the gun—he has met, he has taken, he has killed!

Mama mia! Corpo di Baccho! Accidente!" and so forth. For the Italian-Retainer-Legs very easily despaired.

They sought for Toes in every room, under every table, in every corner of the garden. Then, really anxious, the Legs took torches, and began to search farther up the mule-tracks, meanwhile sending the Italian-Retainer-Legs down to the town to make breathless inquiries. Thus the house was deserted, except for Boris the guardian—for Renny was having conceited dreams in her kennel—when Golden Toes stumbled into the hall, and blinked at the light, and at Boris. . . .

He was perhaps the most dilapidated-looking spaniel in the whole world of spanieldom; wet, tousled, his hair matted and muddy where the short sturdy legs had not lifted his body high enough to clear the ground, stuck all over with leaves, one ear inside out, his nose a disgrace, his tail draggled—but still invincible.

"Great Spratt!" exclaimed Boris, "if you don't take the biscuit! Where *have* you been? Did the Official-Legs get you? The Legs are hunting for you all over the place. I wouldn't be on your paws for anything, when they see you. You *are* a muddy fool!"

But Toes did not seem in the least perturbed or apprehensive. It was doubtful whether he had even heard Boris. His eyes were rims of blazing topaz round their velvety black pupils; and his behaviour had that strange fantastic gleam on it, far removed from the homely Toes that Boris thought he knew so well.

For he walked straight past the Big Wolf and into the sitting-room, where the six windows were squares of

TOES UNMASKED

sapphire dusk, and the gallant flames from the olive-wood fire illuminated the empty divan, covered by a Persian rug of faintly blended colours, and the many cushions on the divan, and the heap of delicate pale pink *crêpe de Chine* which the Womanly-Legs had been embroidering the night before and had carelessly left there. It looked very luxurious, and it was, of course, strictly forbidden territory to any dog whatsoever. But Toes, not even hesitating, placed both his large, wet, earth-encrusted fore-paws upon the Persian rug, and wriggled his way up on to the cushions, heaved and scrabbled about for a moment until he got comfortable at the end of the divan nearest the fire, and then sank down against a dainty background of *crêpe de Chine*, and lay spatchcock . . . while Boris gazed at him with open jaws, utterly bewildered and aghast.

For Toes was above himself. The divan was for the Legs, but he judged that his wisdom was now equal to the wisdom of the Legs, for he knew that which they knew: he had guessed the secret of the mysterious affinity between the seed and the flower and the fruit; he was aware that out of desire and a dream may be wrought an eternal chain, not to be broken down the generations of dog, through his puppies, and his puppies' puppies. . . .

Golden Toes was not arrogant, but he simply could not see, this night, why he was not an equal of the Legs.

—Until they came in.

“TOES!!!” thundered the Legs-in-Authority. They were hoarse from crying his name; tired out with the added anxiety of his disappearance, on top of the dog-

show; thoroughly upset and irritable and worried. And then they came in to find him. . . .

Toes collapsed. He collapsed utterly. Flown was his conviction, logical yet exalted, that he was lordly and godlike, and could do as he pleased. He was just a spaniel again—a very wet and dirty spaniel, a disobedient spaniel who would probably be thrashed, a spaniel on the divan where he didn't ought to be.

He rolled over on to his back and waved his four abject paws in the air, and let a yard of red flannel tongue loll foolishly; for with all his pricked dignity, he just remembered that it was as a comic character the Legs knew him, and as a comic character they might just pardon him.

The Legs-in-Authority was rather angry with Savoury-Legs, when, a couple of months later, he heard the news about Ossie. He suspected that Savoury-Legs had been a lax guardian.

“You'll have to keep one, of course, to comfort Ossie. Only one, though. The rest had better be drowned straight away. She's not old enough to bring up a litter, and besides . . .”

What remained unsaid was his conviction that a suitor must undoubtedly have presented himself at the gardener's hut, at the time of wooing, who was neither distinguished for his nobility nor with any pretensions of beauty and learning. Savoury-Legs obeyed orders in a great hurry; for it had by now penetrated to the obstinate portion of his skull that the English, and the Legs-in-

TOES UNMASKED

Authority particularly, knew more than he did about the care of sport-dogs; and he was fearful lest he might lose his darling, his black gem, his elegant princess, La Pops.

So Ossie was very rarely seen any more at La Lucceola, but her absence was quite imperceptible. For this was mid-January, when in Italy you may take a deep breath and say already: "Winter is nearly over. Look, the violets are out!" And the dogs at La Lucceola always rejoiced and grew excited when the Legs began to make remarks of this nature. Boris and Toes, Renny, Tessa and Rollo the wolf-pup, did not pick violets themselves, but they loved being taken for long walks; and it was so nice, while they stretched their limbs, springing from terrace to terrace, or tore round in mad circles under the olives, for the Legs to have some quite harmless interest that prevented them from turning homewards too early. For after the violets came the narcissi, milky clots in the dusky silver shadows, and then the wild tulips and the grape hyacinths, and after that all the family of orchis, and bright blue borage mingling with wild garlic, growing in rings of sky and snow round the roots of the trees.

And now it was late April, and the Legs were still going for walks, for they could pick huge armfuls of wild gladioli and spikes of brilliant yellow broom; and they trod on scented wild thyme, and there were clumps of wistful love-in-a-mist, and patches of red poppies.

One day, instead of going straight on and up, towards the circle of umbrella-pines on top of the hill, the Legs-in-Authority turned sharply to the left, calling to Renny, who was scuffling away far down the valley on

some business of her own. He had heard rumours of some special lily that had been seen in this new direction.

Suddenly, where an open terrace broke abruptly away down to the valley and the sea, they came to a little magical clearing, in a trance of soft sunshine. A very tall cypress stood beside a dark and bushy ilex-tree. It was the cypress which could be seen from La Lucceola. "I believe somebody told me that Savoury-Legs lives near here," remarked Boris to Tessa.

Toes was ahead of them all. He rushed forward happily, as though on familiar ground, sniffed for an instant round the broken walls of a one-roomed hut, grey and dreaming among the scattered olive-trees, whose branches were themselves like twisted dreams, across the motionless dark-blue sea. . . . And then his glad barking drew a volley of shorter, sharper barking from the farther side, the shady side. He was unseen now, but the Legs followed him round. There, facing the cool east, for all the south and west were stewing in the hot afternoon, lay Savoury-Legs, relaxed, asleep on the grass, in the shade; and there, only a pace or two away, sat Ossie tenderly watching over him.

But the barks were not from her; in fact, she was distinctly anxious for fear the silence so swiftly broken might disturb the slumberer's peace. A black spaniel puppy, more beautiful than Renny, far more beautiful than Toes, and infinitely more beautiful than Ossie, was tumbling over and over in jubilant welcome of the big golden-brown spaniel, who affectionately licked him, and adjusted one of his ears.

TOES UNMASKED

"Good heavens!" gasped the Legs-in-Authority, "that can't be——? Yes—no—it must be, though! By Jove, and he's the very image of Leander!"

The joyous tumble of brown spaniel and black spaniel lurched over Savoury-Legs' face. Ossie reproved them, but it was too late. The idyll was shattered. Awake, and not at all embarrassed, he greeted his Employer-Legs, and begged them to take a glass of wine with him.

Ignoring the suggestion, they broke into bewildered enquiries about the black puppy. "We simply *must* have him," whispered the Shapely-Legs to the Legs-in-Authority. It did not look as though this were going to be difficult. Savoury-Legs, apparently, was disappointed in Ossie's offspring, so different from the mother, and therefore obviously not, in his eyes, a *cagnia di razza*. He proceeded to demonstrate to the Legs how all the puppy's points were wrong, and was just about to sell him back to La Luceola for a dummi-junni of strong local vintage, when Ossie's imploring little paws, and upturned liquid eyes, reminded him that alien qualities of thrift and sobriety were what La Pops preferred in the Savoury-Legs of her adoption. And with a stern and lordly gesture, he bargained for five hundred lire, instead.

The Legs-in-Authority shrugged his shoulders, but consented. It was obvious that the grandson of the famous Dark Gentleman of San Remo was peerless according to the existing spaniel standards. A throwback, of course. But also a miracle.

G . B . S T E R N

"But who's the father?" he cried, remembering that some miracles have their solution.

Savoury-Legs pointed to a massive hunk of golden-brown, now lying spatchcock, his coat like a beach of ribbed sand at sunset, his topaz eyes fondly, proudly fixed upon the gambolling puppy. . . .

"Il Toes!" said Savoury-Legs.

BY
C. T. STONEHAM



VICTIMS OF THE BULLET

As a philanthropist Gregory Mitchell was renowned. He had made his fortune during the latter years of the war. In 1915 he had gone to France with his regiment and in his first engagement had intercepted a bullet which smashed his right knee. The German Infantryman who fired that bullet had taken pains to file the top off it for the greater discomfort of the enemies of the Fatherland; the injury to Captain Mitchell's knee was gruesome.

He suffered twelve months of agony in a nursing home, and at last was discharged cured, a triumph of modern surgery. His leg was permanently stiff, the knee joint no longer existed.

During his period of incapacitation Mitchell had continued to transact business. Between surgical operations he made good use of the telephone beside his bed. The firm of Mitchell & Saunders turned all its energies to making Army equipment; after the war it continued to make equipment for armies other than British, but by that time Gregory Mitchell was out of it. He turned his

abundant energy to the Stock Exchange, and the service of disabled soldiers. He built clubs, founded institutions, and collected vast sums for charity. He did an enormous amount of good, refused a knighthood, and declined to enter politics, so that no man spoke anything but good of him. To all who were unfortunate he was a brother.

Mitchell had settled several men on the land in Kenya Colony. He was prevailed upon to visit that country as the guest of his old colonel, and, being due a respite from his arduous labours, he went.

Mitchell was a sportsman, it was natural he should wish to hunt in a country where big game abounded, but his stiff leg made this pastime exceedingly difficult. However, he managed to bag a few antelopes and one lion by shooting from a motor car. He would have shot much more, but disliked the method: he had been reared in old-fashioned surroundings.

One day as Colonel Gerrard was driving him across the Lykipia veld they saw an animal skulking behind a bush on the edge of a donga two hundred yards away. It showed spotted fur in a gleam of sunlight, evidently it was a leopard. Gerrard hated the beasts which killed his sheep; he stopped the car. "Try a shot," he said.

Mitchell could see little of the animal, but he knew he was not likely to get a better chance than this at such elusive game. He picked up his host's .350 Magnum, took steady aim, and sped a copper-nosed bullet towards the living target. They saw the creature jump, and run down into the donga out of sight.

"I don't think I hit him," said Mitchell dubiously.

VICTIMS OF THE BULLET

"Light is too fierce," Gerrard commented. "Hard luck." He released the clutch and the car moved on its way.

The beast Mitchell had fired at was not a leopard but a chita. It had stood on the edge of the donga, by chance behind the bush, a slender, graceful animal, with very long legs, and a small head which it held proudly erect. This poised, alert attitude would have enabled Gerrard to distinguish it from *felis pardus*'s slinking, furtive demeanour as far as he could see it, had he been able to see more than its bare outline.

Mitchell's soft-nosed bullet had ricocheted from a rock and struck Nado in the right front-paw, smashing it to a pulp of splintered bones and mangled flesh. He fell, rather than ran, into the friendly concealment of the donga. He did not understand what had happened to him: one moment he had been standing gazing over the veld at a distant herd of gazelles, the next he had received this injury from an enemy unsuspected. But he connected the attack with the report of the rifle and the whine of the engine; he knew the enmity of man and feared him as man fears a vague, incomprehensible devil who afflicts him with ills beyond his analysis.

It seemed to him that the man had loosed some ally who had run along the ground and bitten him in the foot, he was horribly afraid that ally was concealed near by and would dash at him again to inflict further damage. Flight was imperative; he scrambled away down the sandy bed of the donga, using his shattered paw to help him, until the raw flesh was coated with sand and frag-

ments of sticks. When he could go no farther he subsided into a patch of grass and lay there panting.

There was no pursuit; Nado was safe. Then he began to suffer.

Here were no doctors, no anæsthetics, no sympathizers: the chita was alone in the wilderness where every creature would seek to profit by his helplessness, persistently, pitilessly. The ground swarmed with voracious ants, the air with blood-sucking flies; at every turn were cunning predatory beasts to whom the wounded chita meant food. Yet he was better off than a buck, for he could dress his injury.

He cleaned the wound with careful, exploratory tongue, and lay bearing his pain with uncomplaining fortitude. His was a fine, sensitive organism. Each nerve and muscle was adapted to receive the messages of physical contact and transmit them to an impressionable brain; he could hear and see better than man; his beautiful skin collected sensations from brushing grass-blade, or varying breeze; he was a bundle of nervous energy. His sufferings were hardly less acute than those of a highly sensitive man in like case. But he made no parade of them; there was no one to notice, no one to care, unless it might be an enemy to whom his distress was encouragement. Only the restless movements of his head, his panting breath, the glare of his yellow eyes, disclosed his anguish.

Towards sunset the chita bestirred himself, dragged his pain-racked body farther down the donga, and found concealment in a pile of rocks. He spent the night there and no enemy discovered him. At intervals he massaged

VICTIMS OF THE BULLET

his wound, which, due to this attention, remained open and healthy.

At dawn he began the difficult, risky task of travelling to water. The donga communicated with a river a mile away; Nado kept to the smooth sand of the old water-course, having no wish to show himself on the veld. He went very slowly, hopping on his sound front leg, pausing frequently to rest.

The sun rose, the bushes became lively with chirping birds. Gaudy butterflies flapped heavily along the sand as he disturbed them at their sunbathing. Brilliant lizards chased each other over the rocks; a viper departed hissing into the grass. In the busy happiness of this bright morning the chita seemed the only creature unable to share the joy of living. He panted and laboured, but he struggled indomitably on.

Over the rim of the donga appeared the sharp muzzle and pointed ears of a black-backed jackal. It stood watching the chita, and in a moment it was joined by its mate.

Nado stared back with fierce eyes, calculating and threatening. This was evil fortune; when well the jackals were beneath his contempt, but crippled he feared them.

The intelligent beasts understood his trouble, they hoped to gain some profit here. The story of their lives was of amazing patience and industry. They led a precarious existence, food did not often come their way; but every waking hour was spent in the search for sustenance. If they found it before their reserves ran out they continued to exist, if not they perished. So they

prosecuted the search with unflagging diligence, and overlooked no chance of obtaining a windfall.

The wounded chita might starve to death; the jackals were content to bear him company for a few days to see how he progressed. They kept him in sight, while quartering the grass for birds' nests or rodents, and Nado knew that they were with him, waiting for his strength to decline to the point where he would be powerless to keep them from his throat.

His problem was meat. The chita captures his prey by the speed of his attack; he steals up as near as possible to the quarry, rushes out, and overtakes it as it flies. If he can get within a hundred yards of an antelope it has small chance of escaping, for the long-legged hunting leopard can run faster than any living beast. Nado would never employ that marvellous speed again; henceforth he must learn a new way of hunting; cunning must replace agility if he would survive.

He reached the river at a spot where it ran among beds of rushes. There were sandy glades under the shady acacia trees; white storks stood on the rocks preening themselves; a warthog wallowed in a pool by the margin. Nado looked all ways along the bank for signs of an enemy, then he approached the water and drank his fill. A few yards away the jackals also drank, regarding him side-long, estimating his chances of recovery and their hopes of eating him. It was an unpleasant experience for the haughty chita, who was a hunter of big beasts, one of the wild's aristocrats.

After his drink Nado rested for a time. Then he made

VICTIMS OF THE BULLET

his way slowly through the glades along by the river until he came to a grassy patch in which lay a big, fallen tree. Round its base the grasses were tangled: several little holes showed that this was the home of a colony of striped veld-mice.

Nado hoisted himself gingerly on to the top of the log, and settled down to wait and watch. The jackals lay under a bush on the edge of the glade, where they yawned sleepily, and dozed with their heads up.

At the end of ten minutes there was a shrill squeaking and two mice shot out of the grass, running towards a hole at the foot of a tree three yards away. Nado sprang after pursued and pursuer. But he was clumsy on three legs, with a fourth which was not only useless but a serious impediment, the mice escaped him, disappearing panic-stricken into their sheltering hole. The jackals opened their eyes to blink sardonically at this failure: Nado climbed back on the log and licked his aching paw while waiting stoically for another chance.

Several times during the day he attempted to capture the scurrying mice but by nightfall he had caught only one. It was but a mouthful for a big beast like the chita.

In the moonlight he went to the river to drink, and the jackals took his place by the log. In a quarter of an hour they caught six mice, then they took the trail of the chita to make sure he was not trying to escape them.

The next day Nado hunted frogs in the rushes. Even this quarry was too agile for him in his crippled state; he caught a few but they were insufficient to stem the raging hunger which tormented him. The ensuing days

were a terrible experience for the unhappy beast; with unwearying patience he concentrated upon this important task of obtaining food where everything edible was as determined as himself in the struggle for survival. He ate grass and bark, but this provender was unsuited to him and he gained no strength from it.

At the end of a week he was thin and starved, but his wound had skinned over, splinters of bone had ceased to protrude, the pain of it was less severe. Nado began to feel he would recover. He had the extraordinary tenacity of the wild animal: life would burn strongly in him to the last gasp, when with hardly a flicker it would be extinguished. It was a race between the slow healing of his wound, the stubborn resistance of his vitality, and the wastage of his insistent flesh. With the easing of his intolerable pain confidence reasserted itself; he would be proof against all misfortune, and once again tread the veld in the pride of his strength and courage.

The jackals were still with him. They supported life by hunting the small creatures in the vicinity; they stalked the francolin on her nest, the hare in its form, and they waited patiently for the bigger game which fortune had sent them.

There came a morning when Nado lay in a glade by the river watching for the ubiquitous but elusive mice. He was in a bad state, there was hardly strength in his emaciated frame to make the abortive pounce when rustling and squeaking told him the moment for action had come. His injured paw seemed to have shrunk, it had formed into a shapeless club and was still too tender

VICTIMS OF THE BULLET

for use. When he jumped into the grass to surprise the mice he often overbalanced, for one paw was unable to effect the capture and sustain his weight at the same moment. This swift, nimble creature had become as clumsy as a circus clown; even the jackals seemed amused as they watched his awkward tumbles.

After a dozen ludicrous failures Nado gave it up and lay sulkily bearing his intense hunger. At dusk he would go hunting the nesting birds again, though experience had shown him the unlikelihood of his being able to surprise those suspicious creatures.

A bushbuck fed on the edge of the glade, unconscious of the watching chita. Nado's mouth drooled as he looked at it; what an easy quarry if he had his strength and speed! It was not fifty yards away, at one time he would have crossed that gap in a lightning rush outrivalling the flight of the swallow. He was starving, and the meat was placed tantalizingly before his eyes. It was beyond bearing.

Intuitively he knew that never again would he chase the fleet quarry, make his flying tackle at the straining throat, and feast full on warm flesh. Almost his spirit succumbed to despair in that hour.

Suddenly the buck threw up its head and snorted wildly. It plunged into panic flight across the glade, scattering the earth with slashing hoofs. Behind it came a long, grey shape, studded with black—a chita. The chita moved two leaps to the buck's one, it overhauled the fugitive, sprang at its neck, and pulled it down in a kicking heap. Its jaws were fastened on the throat, it did

not loose that hold until the last spark of life was extinguished.

Nado got up and began to hop across the glade towards the kill. The stranger raised his head to examine this thin, crippled fellow who appeared so unexpectedly out of the grass. He was a young male chita, smaller than Nado; he had the slender, proud carriage and fierce eyes of his breed.

Nado made a placating sound, half whine, half mew. Changit replied in friendly, encouraging fashion. There was no jealousy between chitas, often they hunted in packs, several of one sex together.

Nado knew that he was saved; this youngster would share the kill with his unfortunate comrade. He threw himself on the meat and began to bite off great chunks from the haunch, devouring them without mastication.

Changit came round to sniff at him, then he disembowelled the buck and selected for himself the tender meat of lungs and heart. The jackals advanced to sit like dogs at a respectful distance watching their betters feast. Their chance would come; the time spent in following the crippled chita had not been wasted.

All that day the two chitas lay in the grass by the river content with each other's company. The jackals were not far away, also replete, and satisfied to have a well-stocked larder close at hand. The kill was under a tree, the vultures could not see it from their lofty stations in the skies, until the hyenas smelt it out it was safe from thieves.

They fed on the buck for two days, and Nado's strength returned rapidly. At the end of that time a lion

VICTIMS OF THE BULLET

came along and dispossessed them. Changit and Nado moved away up to the plains, leaving the despot to enjoy his ill-gotten meal.

Nado could now move more easily, he had learnt the trick of hopping on one paw, carrying the other tucked up out of the way of grass and thorns. Soon he would be able to make use of the injured member to support his weight; he would always be a cripple, but would be able to hunt by stealth and keep himself alive.

Meanwhile Changit was the provider. The young chita caught game in his usual speedy fashion; Nado would follow slowly on the spoor until he came to the kill, where he was made welcome. Sometimes it took him hours to arrive at the banquet, but with each successful day his strength improved and his wound grew less troublesome.

For a month this partnership continued, then it dissolved as fortuitously as it had arisen. One moonlit night Changit chased a granti; the gazelle had a good start of him and his first rush was expended fruitlessly. The chita cannot maintain his devouring speed for long; Changit gave up that pursuit and went on in hopes of finding another quarry, leaving Nado toiling far in the rear. Three successive gazelles were chased before Changit made his kill, and by that time he had put five miles of difficult country between himself and his comrade. He had crossed lava, leaped nullahs, and splashed through a vleis; his trail was lost. Nado followed it painstakingly till daylight, then fatigue forced him to rest. He never saw Changit again.

Once again he was obliged to fend for himself, but now he was stronger and more mobile: the problem was not insoluble. He devoted himself to the pursuit of guinea-fowl and rock rabbits. He would lie in wait among the rocks until the rabbits emerged within reach of his spring, or stalk the foolish birds through the bushes hoping for one to blunder into his jaws. His captures were few, but he managed to support life.

Then he discovered an easier manner of hunting; he began to prey upon man's possessions. His wanderings had brought him to Colonel Gerrard's farm and Gerrard kept chickens and turkeys. Nado found that he could creep into the farmstead at night, avoid disturbing the sleepy dogs, and purloin the livestock. Often the careless natives left doors ajar, or forgot to confine the fowls for the night; Nado profited by their oversights. In common with most East African farmers Gerrard did not pay much attention to his poultry. He was primarily a stock-farmer, regarding his chickens as necessary adjuncts to his establishment, and their decimation by wild beasts as unavoidable. Nado's two or three kills a week did not occasion any revengeful measures.

The chita lay up near the farm to be close handy to his hunting-ground. He was undisturbed by the passing of natives and cattle within a few yards of his retreat. Life was more comfortable for him than at any time since his accident.

Gregory Mitchell's African visit was drawing to a close. He had been three months from home, and his many interests suffered from his inattention. He was loath

VICTIMS OF THE BULLET

to return, for he had discovered that his stiff knee did not interfere with the pleasures of horse-riding over the boundless veld of this salubrious country.

A week before his departure he rose early one morning and saddled one of Gerrard's ponies for a gallop. The sun had not yet risen, the mists of night still clung to the grasses, the shapes of the game animals were distorted and magnified by the curious light. Mitchell saw Nado returning to cover after a night's hunting.

The chita offered an excuse for a sporting gallop; Mitchell settled down to ride the beast, but without much hope of overtaking it in broken country. But the chita did not speed away faster than any greyhound, it hopped in a clumsy fashion across the rough ground, and Mitchell saw that he had to do with a cripple. He cheered on his pony and rapidly overhauled the prize.

Nado heard the hoofs of the pony close behind him, and the hallooing of the hunter. His hobbling, hopping method of progress was most fatiguing, a mile of such labour was his limit. He could go no farther; he lay down in a patch of grass and prepared for the worst. Against any other animal he could fight, but against man he was powerless; he knew instinctively the hopelessness of opposing that god-like creature.

Mitchell saw that the beast was exhausted; he dismounted, tethered his pony to a thorn bush, and advanced on foot.

He had heard that chitas will not attack man in any circumstances, that when chased they run themselves to a standstill, and are then easily captured. Moreover, he

knew that they make excellent pets. As he approached Nado, crouching in the clump of grass, he congratulated himself on his good fortune in chancing upon this animal just at the end of his holiday.

He had heard that they run until they die of exhaustion: one must be careful not to frighten the beast further. He would steal upon it and make it captive. But he did not like the look of Nado much: the chita crouched glaring at him with the malevolence of a fiend, its mouth wide open, keeping up a continuous hissing like the sound of escaping steam. This was all bluff, of course; he was assured that if you pulled the creature's tail, it would do nothing but try to escape; its intractile claws were little more harmful than those of a dog. But how did you catch your chita when you had caught up with it?

Eventually he solved the problem by taking off his bush-shirt and advancing upon the exhausted animal, holding the garment before him like a shield. At the last moment Nado got up and hopped away in a desperate effort to avoid the terrible enemy, but Mitchell hobbled after him, and the man could hobble faster than the beast could hop.

Nado turned again, threatening the man with all his powers. Mitchell dropped on his knees, threw the bush-shirt over the chita's head, and pulled the belt tight. He hung on to the end of the belt, expecting to be assailed with flailing claws, but Nado, once his eyes were blindfolded, gave up the struggle at once. He lay supine, growling ferociously, but making no attempt to employ his considerable strength for his release.

VICTIMS OF THE BULLET

Mitchell was delighted at the success of his venture. He left the imprisoned chita lying there, jumped on his pony, and galloped back to the farm. In a few minutes Nado was being carried into the home of his enemies with all four feet tied together and his head still enveloped in the muffling drill.

A cage was built for the chita, he was placed in it on the stoep outside the house door. Mitchell set himself to tame the animal.

"If he were able-bodied I would let him go," he said, "for I don't agree with imprisoning wild animals; but he is a cripple like myself, and I know how difficult it must be for him to get a living in the wilds. I intend to take him back to England; he shall be my constant companion to remind me of this pleasant land."

"You have a country estate, exactly the place for him," Gerrard agreed. "I knew an Indian rajah once who had one of these beasts, as tame as a poodle—used to sleep on his bed at night. This is a particularly handsome specimen; it's a pity he has a club foot."

"How did he get that injury, I wonder?"

"Bullet, undoubtedly. Some of these careless swine wound a beast and are too lazy to follow it up and bag it. Criminal, I call it!"

Nado regarded them through blazing yellow eyes in which showed no trace of the kindlier emotions.

Gerrard addressed him. "You are going travelling, old man; you will have a better time as a pampered pet than you ever had in this cruel, hard land."

So Nado went overseas, stowed among other pets in

the hold of a ship, where the butcher dutifully gave him his daily portion of meat and wondered how on earth anyone could expect to tame such a spiteful, snarling creature.

At Wanford, Mitchell's country home in Surrey, the chita was installed as an honoured guest; his master fed him with his own hands on special dainties and gradually accustomed the wild beast to the presence of man.

The day came when Mitchell could put his hand through the bars and stroke the animal's ears, when he could hold a saucer of milk for Nado to lap without fear that a lightning paw-stroke would dash it to the ground. The chita still rumbled threats and hissed like a steam-valve when anyone came near him, but he had no real animosity against his captors: he was frightened, and that was the only defence he knew. His cage was roomy, his days peaceful. Servants came to watch him, murmuring that he was a fine fellow, a beauty—just like a big cat; lady visitors exclaimed that he was too sweet, and wished they might pose in their drawing-rooms with such a delightful foil for company. The wild beast, whose whole life had been spent in an atmosphere of enmity, discovered that these strange creatures were his friends and wished him well. It was apparent in the encouraging tones of their voices and the tit-bits with which they continually rewarded him. At last he understood that they were like chitas, amiable, generous and happy.

From then onwards his progress was rapid. He was led at the end of a chain about the grounds by a staid, portly butler who had a great liking for him; he lay, as

VICTIMS OF THE BULLET

proud and beautiful as Lucifer, on a couch in the drawing-room, while young ladies timidly stroked his long, fluffy tail. He began to sleep at the foot of Mitchell's bed, and to share his breakfast, reclining on the end of the table, behaving as one "to the manner born". He was an aristocrat, and there was none among Mitchell's friends who complained of the familiarity of his pet.

And Nado, with that park to roam in—where the walls imprisoned furred and feathered game as well as himself—with the affection of all who encountered him, grew sleek and fat and happy. The hostile thorns, the barren veld, where life was a continual merciless struggle for an inadequate reward, seemed far removed; that dreadful period of suffering when the jackals dogged him to feed on his failing flesh was almost wiped from his memory.

At this time the German Professor, Karl Zimmerman, came much into the public eye. Being half a Jew, he had been forced to fly from Germany, and had settled in London where he concluded his remarkable investigations in that peculiar form of neurasthenia which he called "War-horror". Very shortly his treatment became fashionable, his cures a journalistic sensation.

Gregory Mitchell was brought into contact with him at a luncheon given in his honour. The Professor grew interested in the philanthropist's work; he saved many of Mitchell's charges from the gas-oven and the mad-house; the two men became fast friends.

Zimmerman visited Mitchell at his London flat; at last he came to stay a week-end at Wanford. He was delighted with Nado. The tameness of the animal supported his

particular view that man and beast should have a better understanding of each other.

"See, my friend, how now he is trusting who once was filled with hatred and fear. And you, perhaps you would have killed him for his fur, but now you would think that murder, heh?"

Mitchell nodded. "Yes, I have been fond of hunting, in my time," he agreed.

They sat in the library at Wanford, drinking port after a satisfying meal which Nado had shared with them. He lay on the hearth-rug, like a statue epitomizing the entry of the wild into man's domain, before a blazing fire which he had come to love.

"There is a bond of sympathy between us," said Mitchell softly, watching his pet. "We have both suffered at the hands of man; we are cripples for the rest of our natural span, deprived of enjoying those things we once enjoyed. But we have found a new way of life, and perhaps we are not sorry."

"Both victims of the bullet," said Zimmerman. "Life is a strange business, my friend. As a young medical student I made my debut on the battlefield at the fight you call Loos. I was filled with ardour, the passion of patriotism.

"I remember very well that I stood in my trench straining my eyes for the first sight of the hated enemy advancing towards us over the shelled ground. And presently I saw those dim figures through the mist. I was glad.

"In my pouch was a bullet from which I had cut away the nickel—what you would say a dum-dum. This I

VICTIMS OF THE BULLET

intended for an Englishman: my first blow in defence of my beloved country. I put it into my rifle and took aim at those straggling figures, right into the midst of a group of them."

He paused to puff meditatively at his cigar. "Does it not seem strange: this young man who was later to devote many weary days and nights to comforting those same men he then longed to destroy? Who, I wonder, received that spiteful bullet—that dreadful bullet prepared by Karl Zimmerman the madman?" He stared hard at his friend, and said slowly, "You were wounded in that battle; perhaps it was you".

Mitchell laughed. "Hardly likely, Karl. That is stretching coincidence too far. But if it was, I forgive you, old man."

He lent forward to lay a caressing hand on Nado's head. "Still, it is no more likely than that mine should have been the bullet which maimed this beautiful creature, eh, Nado?"

Nado licked his hand.

BY
HUGH WALPOLE



THE WHISTLE

Mrs. Penwin gave one of her nervous little screams when she saw the dog.

“Oh, Charlie!” she cried. “You surely haven’t bought it!” and her little brow, that she tried so fiercely to keep smooth, puckered into its customary little gathering of wrinkles.

The dog, taking an instant dislike to her, sank his head between his shoulders. He was an Alsatian.

“Well . . .” said Charlie, smiling nervously. He knew that his impulsiveness had led him once more astray. “Only the other evening you were saying that you’d like a dog.”

“Yes, but *not* an Alsatian! You *know* what Alsatisans are. We read about them in the paper every day. They are simply not to be trusted. *I’m sure* he looks as vicious as anything. And what about Mopsa?”

“Oh, Mopsa . . .” Charlie hesitated. “He’ll be all right. You see, Sibyl, it was charity really. The Sillons are going to London as you know. They simply can’t take him. It

THE WHISTLE

wouldn't be fair. They've found it difficult enough in Edinburgh as it is."

"I'm sure they are simply getting rid of him because he's vicious."

"No, Maude Sillon assured me. He's like a lamb——"

"Oh, Maude! She'd say anything!"

"You know that you've been wanting a companion for Mopsa——"

"A companion for Mopsa! That's good!" Sibyl laughed her shrill little laugh that was always just out of tune.

"Well, we'll try him. We can easily get rid of him. And Blake shall look after him."

"Blake!" She was scornful. She detested Blake, but he was too good a chauffeur to lose.

"And he's most awfully handsome. You can't deny it."

She looked. Yes, he was most awfully handsome. He had lain down, his head on his paws, staring in front of him, quite motionless. He seemed to be waiting ironically until he should be given his next command. The power in those muscles, moulded under the skin, must be terrific. His long wolf ears lay flat. His colour was lovely, here silver-grey, there faintly amber. Yes, he was a magnificent dog. A little like Blake in his strength, silence, sulkiness.

She turned again to the note that she was writing.

"We'll try him if you like. Anyway there are no children about. It's Blake's responsibility—and the moment he's tiresome he goes."

Charlie was relieved. It hadn't been so bad after all.

"Oh, Blake says he doesn't mind. In fact he seemed to take to the dog at once. I'll call him."

He went to the double windows that opened into the garden and called: "Blake! Blake!"

Blake came. He was still in his chauffeur's uniform, having just driven his master and the dog in from Keswick. He was a large man, very fair in colouring, plainly of great strength. His expression was absolutely English in its absence of curiosity, its certainty that it knew the best about everything, its suspicion, its determination not to be taken in by anybody, and its latent kindliness. He had blue eyes and was clean-shaven; his cap was in his hand, and his hair, which was fair almost to whiteness, lay roughly across his forehead. He was not especially neat but of a quite shining cleanliness.

The dog got up and moved towards him. Both the Penwins were short and slight; they looked now rather absurdly small beside the man and the dog.

"Look here, Blake," said Charlie Penwin, speaking with much authority, "Mrs. Penwin is nervous about the dog. He's your responsibility, mind, and if there's the slightest bit of trouble, he goes. You understand that?"

"Yes, sir," said Blake, looking at the dog. "But there won't be no trouble."

"That's a ridiculous thing to say," remarked Mrs. Penwin sharply, looking up from her note. "How can you be sure, Blake? You know how uncertain Alsatians are. I don't know what Mr. Penwin was thinking about."

Blake said nothing. Once again and for the hundred-thousandth time both the Penwins wished that they could pierce him with needles. It was quite terrible the way that Blake didn't speak when expected to, but then he was so

THE WHISTLE

wonderful a chauffeur, so good a driver, so excellent a mechanic, so honest—and Clara, his wife, was an admirable cook.

"You'd better take the dog with you now, Blake. What's his name?"

"Adam," said Charlie.

"Adam! What a foolish name for a dog! Now don't disturb Clara with him, Blake. Clara hates to have her kitchen messed up."

Blake, without a word, turned and went, the dog following closely at his heels.

Yes, Clara hated to have her kitchen messed up. She was standing now, her sleeves rolled up, her plump hands and wrists covered with dough. Mopsa, the Sealyham, sat at her side, his eyes, glistening with greed, raised to those doughy arms. But at sight of the Alsatian he turned instantly and flew at his throat. He was a dog who prided himself on fighting instantly every other dog. With human beings he was mild and indifferently amiable. Children could do what they would with him. He was exceedingly conceited, and cared for no one but himself.

He was clever, however, and hid this indifference from many sentimental human beings.

Blake with difficulty separated the two dogs. The Alsatian behaved quite admirably, simply restraining the Sealyham and looking up at Blake, saying, "I won't let myself go here although I should like to. I know that you would rather I didn't." The Sealyham, breathing deeply, bore the Alsatian no grudge. He was simply determined that he should have no foothold here.

Torrents of words poured from Clara. She had always as much to say as her husband had little. She said the same thing many times over as though she had an idiot to deal with. She knew that her husband was not an idiot—very far from it—but she had for many years been trying to make some impression on him. Defeated beyond hope, all she could now do was to resort to old and familiar tactics. What was this great savage dog? Where had he come from? Surely the mistress didn't approve, and she wouldn't have the kitchen messed up, not for anybody, and as Harry (Blake) very well knew nothing upset her like a dog-fight, and if they were going to be perpetual, which knowing Mopsa's character they probably would be, she must just go to Mrs. Penwin and tell her that, sorry though she was after being with her all these years, she just couldn't stand it and would have to go, for if there was one thing more than another that really upset her it was a dog-fight and as Harry knew having her kitchen messed up was a thing that she couldn't stand. She paused and began vehemently to roll her dough. She was short and plump with fair hair and blue eyes like her husband's. When excited, little glistening beads of sweat appeared on her forehead. No one in this world knew whether Blake was fond of her or no. Clara Blake least of all. She wondered perpetually; this uncertainty and her cooking were her two principal interests in life. There were times when Blake seemed very fond of her indeed, others when he appeared not to be aware that she existed.

All he said now was: "The dog won't be no trouble," then went out, the dog at his heels. The Sealyham thought

THE WHISTLE

for a moment that he would follow him, then, with a little sniff of greed, settled himself down again at Clara Blake's feet.

The two went out into the thin misty autumn sunshine, down through the garden into the garage. The Alsatian walked very closely beside Blake as though some invisible cord held them together. All his life, now two years in length, it had been his instant principle to attach himself to somebody. For, in this curious world where he was, not his natural world at all, every breath, every movement, rustle of wind, sound of voices, patter of rain, ringing of bells, filled him with nervous alarm. He went always on guard, keeping his secret soul to himself, surrendering nothing, a captive in the country of the enemy. There might exist a human being to whom he would surrender himself. Although he had been attached to several he had not, in his two years, yet found one to whom he could give himself. Now as he trod softly over the amber and rosy leaves he was not sure that this man beside whom he walked might not be the one.

In the garage Blake took off his coat, put on his blue overalls, and began to work. The dog stretched himself out on the stone floor, his head on his paws, and waited. Once and again he started, his pointed ears pricked, at some unexpected sound. A breeze blew the brown leaves up and down in the sun, and the white road beyond the garage pierced like a shining bone the cloudless sky.

Blake's thoughts ran, as they always did, with slow assurance. This was a fine dog. He'd known the first moment that he set eyes on him that this was the dog for him.

HUGH WALPOLE

At that first glance something in his heart had been satisfied, something that had for years been unfulfilled. For they had had no children, he and Clara, and a motor car was fine to drive and look after, but after all it couldn't give you everything, and he wasn't one to make friends (too damned cautious), and the people he worked for were all right but nothing extra, and he really didn't know whether he cared for Clara or no. It was so difficult after so many years married to tell. There were lots of times when he couldn't sort of see her at all.

He began to take out the sparking-plugs to clean them. That was the worst of these Heldsons, fine cars, as good as any going, but you had to be for ever cleaning the sparking-plugs. Yes, that dog was a beauty. He was going to take to that dog.

The dog looked at him, stared at him as though he were saying something. Blake looked at the dog. Then, with a deep sigh, as though some matter, for long uncertain, were at last completely settled, the dog rested again his head on his paws, staring in front of him, and so fell asleep. Blake, softly whistling, continued his work.

A very small factor, in itself quite unimportant, can bring into serious conflict urgent forces. So it was now when this dog Adam came into the life of the Penwins.

Mrs. Penwin, like so many English wives and unlike all American wives, had never known so much domestic power as she desired. Her husband was of course devoted to her, but he was for ever just escaping her, escaping her into that world of men that is so important in England,

THE WHISTLE

that is, even in these very modern days, still a world in the main apart from women.

Charlie Penwin had not very many opportunities to escape from his wife and he was glad that he had not, for when they came he took them. His ideal was the ideal of most English married men (and of very few American married men), namely, that he should be a perfect companion to his wife. He fulfilled this ideal; they were excellent companions, the two of them, so excellent that it was all the more interesting and invigorating when he could go away for a time and be a companion to someone else, to Willie Shaftoe for instance, with whom he sometimes stayed in his place near Carlisle, or even for a day's golf with the Rev. Thomas Bird, rector of a church in Keswick.

Mrs. Penwin, in fact, had never, in spite of his profound devotion to her, entirely captured the whole of her husband; a small fragment eternally escaped her, and this escape was a very real grievance to her. Like a wise woman she did not make scenes—no English husband can endure scenes—but she was always attempting to stop up this one little avenue of escape. But most provoking! So soon as one avenue was closed another would appear.

She realized very quickly (for she was not at all a fool) that this Alsatian was assisting her husband to escape from her because his presence in their household was bringing him into closer contact with Blake. Both the Penwins feared Blake and admired him; to friends and strangers they spoke of him with intense pride—"What we should

do without Blake I can't think!"—"But aren't we lucky in *these* days to have a chauffeur whom we can completely trust?"

Nevertheless, behind these sentiments, there was this great difference, that Mrs. Penwin disliked Blake extremely (whenever he looked at her he made her feel a weak, helpless and idiotic woman), while Charlie Penwin, although he was afraid of him, in his heart liked him very much indeed.

If Blake only were human, little Charlie Penwin, who was a sentimentalist, used to think—and now, suddenly, Blake *was* human. He had gone "dotty" about this dog, and the dog followed him like a shadow. So close were they the one to the other that you could almost imagine that they held conversations together.

Then Blake came in to his master's room one day to ask whether Adam could sleep in his room. He had a small room next to Mrs. Blake's, because he was often out late with the car at night and must rise very early in the morning. Clara Blake liked to have her sleep undisturbed.

"You see, sir," he said, "he won't sort of settle down in the outhouse. He's restless: I know he is."

"How do you know he is?" asked Charlie Penwin.

"I can sort of feel it, sir. He won't be no sort of trouble in my room. and he'll be a fine guard to the house at night."

The two men looked at one another and were in that moment friends. They both smiled.

"Very well, Blake. I don't think there's anything against it."

THE WHISTLE

Of course there *were* things against it. Mrs. Penwin hated the idea of the dog sleeping in the house. She did not really hate it; what she hated was that Blake and her husband should settle this thing without a word to her. Nor, when she protested, would her husband falter. Blake wanted it. It would be a good protection for the house.

Blake discovered a very odd whistle with which he called the dog. Putting two fingers into his mouth he called forth this strange note that seemed to penetrate into endless distance and that had in it something mysterious, melancholy and dangerous. It was musical and inhuman; friends of the Penwins, comfortably at tea, would hear this thin whistling cry coming, it seemed, from far away beyond the Fells, having in it some part of the Lake and the distant sea tumbling on Drigg sands, and of the lonely places in Eskdale and Ennerdale.

"What's that?" they would say, looking up.

"Oh, it's Blake calling his dog."

"What a strange whistle!"

"Yes, it's the only one the dog hears."

The dog did hear it, at any distance, in any place. When Blake went with the car the Alsatian would lie on the upper lawn whence he could see the road, and wait for his return.

He would both see and hear the car's return, but he would not stir until Blake, released from his official duties, could whistle to him—then with one bound he would be up, down the garden, and with his front paws up against Blake's chest would show him his joy.

To all the rest of the world he was indifferent. But he was not hostile. He showed indeed an immense patience, and especially with regard to the Sealyham.

The dog Mopsa attempted twice at least every day to kill the Alsatian. He succeeded in biting him severely, but so long as Blake was there Adam showed an infinite control, letting Blake part them although every instinct in him was stirred to battle.

But, after a time, Blake became clever at keeping the two dogs separate; moreover, the Sealyham became afraid of Blake. He was clever enough to realize that when he fought the Alsatian he fought Blake as well—and Blake was too much for him.

Very soon, however, Blake was at war not only with the Sealyham but with his wife and Mrs. Penwin too. You might think that the words "at war" were too strong when nothing was to be seen on the surface. Mrs. Blake said nothing, Mrs. Penwin said nothing, Blake himself said nothing.

Save for the fights with the Sealyham there was no charge whatever to bring against the Alsatian. He was never in anyone's way, he brought no dirt into the house, whenever Charlie Penwin took him in the car he sat motionless on the back seat, his wolf ears pricked up, his large and beautiful eyes sternly regarding the outside world, but his consciousness fixed only upon Blake's back, broad and masterly above the wheel.

No charge could be brought against him except that the devotion between the man and the dog was, in this little house of ordered emotions, routine habits, quiet sterility,

THE WHISTLE

almost terrible. Mrs. Blake, as her husband left her one night to return to his own room, broke out:

"If you'd loved me as you love that dog I'd have had a different life."

Blake patted her shoulder, moist beneath her night-dress.

"I love you all right, my girl," he said.

And Mrs. Penwin found that here she could not move her husband.

Again and again she said:

"Charlie, that dog's got to go."

"Why?"

"It's dangerous."

"I don't see it."

"Somebody will be bitten one day and then you *will* see it."

"There's a terrible lot of nonsense talked about Alsations. . . ."

And then, when everyone was comfortable, Mrs. Blake reading her *Home Chat*, Mrs. Penwin her novel, Mrs. Fern, Mrs. Penwin's best friend, doing a "crossword", over the misty dank garden, carried, it seemed, by the muffled clouds that floated above the Fell, would sound that strange melancholy whistle, so distant and yet so near, Blake calling his dog.

For Blake himself life was suddenly, and for the first time, complete. He had not known, all this while, what it was that he missed, although he had known that he missed something.

Had Mrs. Blake given him a child he would have real-

ized completion. Mrs. Blake alone had not been enough for his heart. In this dog he found fulfilment because here were all the things that he admired—loyalty, strength, courage, self-reliance, fidelity, comradeship, and above all, sobriety of speech and behaviour. Beyond these there was something more—love. He did not, even to himself, admit the significance of this yet deeper contact. And he analysed nothing.

For the dog, life in this dangerous menacing country of the enemy was at last secure and simple. He had only one thing to do, only one person to consider.

But of course life is not so simple as this for anybody. A battle was being waged and it must have an issue. The Penwins were not in Cumberland during the winter. They went to their little place in Sussex, very close to London and to all their London friends. Mrs. Penwin would not take the Alsatian to Sussex. But why not? asked Charlie. She hated it, Mrs. Blake hated it. That, said Charlie, was not reason enough.

“Do you realize”, said Mrs. Penwin theatrically, “that this dog is dividing us?”

“Nonsense,” said Charlie.

“It is not nonsense. I believe you care more for Blake than you do for me.” She cried. She cried very seldom. Charlie Penwin was uncomfortable, but some deep male obstinacy was roused in him. This had become an affair of the sexes. Men must stand together and protect themselves or they would be swept away in this feminine flood. . . .

Blake knew, Mrs. Blake knew, Mrs. Penwin knew, that the dog would go with them to Sussex unless some de-

THE WHISTLE

finite catastrophe gave Mrs. Penwin the victory. As he lay on his bed at night, seeing the grey wolf-like shadow of the dog stretched on the floor, Blake's soul for the first time in its history trembled at the thought of the slight movement, incident, spoken word, sound, that might rouse the dog beyond his endurance, and precipitate the catastrophe. The dog was behaving magnificently, but he was surrounded by his enemies. Did he know what hung upon his restraint?

Whether he knew or no, the catastrophe arrived, and arrived with the utmost, most violent publicity. On a sun-gleaming russet October afternoon, on the lawn, while Charlie was giving Blake instructions about the car, and Mrs. Penwin put in also her word, Mopsa attacked the Alsatian, Blake ran to separate them, and the Alsatian, sharply bitten, bewildered, humiliated, snapped and caught Blake's leg between his teeth. A moment later he and Blake knew, both of them, what he had done. Blake would have hidden it, but blood was flowing. In the Alsatian's heart remorse, terror, love, and a sense of disaster, a confirmation of all that, since his birth, knowing the traps that his enemies would lay for him, he had suspected, leapt to life together.

Disregarding all else he looked up at Blake.

"And that settles it!" cried Mrs. Penwin, triumphantly. "He goes!"

Blake's leg was badly bitten in three places; they would be scars for life. And it was settled. Before the week was out the dog would be returned to his first owners, who did not want him, who would give him to someone else

HUGH WALPOLE

who also, in turn, through fear or shyness of neighbours, would not want him. . . .

Two days after this catastrophe Mrs. Blake went herself to Mrs. Penwin.

"My husband's that upset . . . I wouldn't care if the dog stays, Mum."

"Why, Clara, you hate the dog."

"Oh, well, Mum, Blake's a good husband to me. I don't like to see him. . . ."

"Why, what has he said?"

"He hasn't said anything, Mum."

But Mrs. Penwin shook her head. "No, Clara, it's ridiculous. The dog's dangerous."

And Blake went to Charlie Penwin. The two men faced one another and were closer together, fonder of one another, man caring for man, than they had ever been before.

"But, Blake, if the dog bites *you* whom he cares for . . . I mean, don't you see, he really *is* dangerous. . . ."

"He wasn't after biting me," said Blake slowly. "And if he *had* to bite somebody, being aggravated and nervous, he'd not find anyone better to bite than me who understands him and knows he don't mean nothing by it."

Charlie Penwin felt in himself a terrible disloyalty to his wife. She could go to. . . . Why should not Blake have his dog? Was he for ever to be dominated by women? For a brief, rocking, threatening moment his whole stable ordered world trembled. He knew that if he said the dog was to remain the dog would remain and that something would have broken between his wife and himself that could never be mended.

THE WHISTLE

He looked at Blake, who with his blue serious eyes stared steadily in front of him. He hesitated. He shook his head.

"No, Blake, it won't do. Mrs. Penwin will never be easy now while the dog is there."

Later in the day Blake did an amazing thing. He went to Mrs. Penwin.

During all these years he had never voluntarily, himself, gone to Mrs. Penwin. He had never gone unless he were sent for. She looked at him and felt as she always did, dislike, admiration, and herself a bit of a fool.

"Well, Blake?"

"If the dog stays I'll make myself responsible. He shan't bite nobody again."

"But how can you tell? You said he wouldn't bite anyone before, and he did?"

"He won't again."

"No, Blake, he's got to go. I shan't have a moment's peace while he's here."

"He's a wonderful dog. I'll have him trained so he won't hurt a fly. He's like a child with me."

"I'm sure he is. Irresponsible like a child. That's why he bit you."

"I don't make nothing of his biting me."

"You may not, but next time it will be someone else. There's something in the paper about them every day."

"He's like a child with me."

"I'm very sorry, Blake. I can't give way about it. You'll see I'm right in the end. My husband ought never to have accepted the dog at all."

After Blake had gone she did not know why, but she felt uneasy, as though she had robbed a blind man, or stolen another woman's lover. Ridiculous! There could be no question but that she was right.

Blake admitted that to himself. She was right. He did not criticize her, but he did not know what to do. He had never felt like this in all his life before, as though part of himself were being torn from him.

On the day before the dog was to go back to his original owners, Blake was sent into Keswick to make some purchases. It was a soft bloomy day, one of those North English autumn days when there is a scent of spices in the sharp air and a rosy light hangs in shadow about the trees. Blake had taken the dog with him, and driving back along the Lake, seeing how it lay a sheet of silver glass upon whose surface the islands were painted in flat colours of auburn and smoky grey, a sudden madness seized him. It was the stillness, the silence, the breathless pause. . . .

Instead of turning to the right over the Grange bridge he drove the car straight on into Borrowdale. It was yet early in the afternoon; all the lovely valley lay in gold leaf at the feet of the russet hills and no cloud moved in the sky. He took the car to Seatoller and climbed with the dog the steep path towards Honister.

And the dog thought that at last what he had longed for was to come to pass. He and Blake were at length free; they would go on and on, leaving all the stupid, nerve-jumping world behind them, never to return to it. With a wild, fierce happiness such as he had never yet shown, he bounded forward, drinking in the cold streams, feeling

THE WHISTLE

the strong turf beneath his feet, running back to Blake to assure him of his comradeship. At last he was free, and life was noble as it ought to be.

At the turn of the road Blake sat down and looked back. All round him were hills. Nothing moved; only the stream close to him slipped murmuring between the boulders. The hills ran ranging from horizon to horizon, and between grey clouds a silver strip of sky, lit by an invisible sun, ran like a river into mist. Blake called the dog to him and laid his hand upon his head. He knew that the dog thought that they two had escaped for ever now from the world. Well, why not? They could walk on, on to the foot of the hill on whose skyline the mining-hut stood like a listening ear, down the Pass to Buttermere, past the lake, past Crummock Water to Cockermouth. Then there would be a train. It would not be difficult for him to get work. His knowledge of cars (he had a genius for them) would serve him anywhere. And Clara? She was almost invisible, a white tiny blob on the horizon. She would find someone else. His hand tightened about the dog's head. . . .

For a long while he sat there, the dog never moving, the silver river spreading in the sky, the hills gathering closer about him.

Suddenly he shook his head. No, he could not. He would be running away, a poor kind of cowardice. He pulled Adam's sharp ears; he buried his face in Adam's fur. He stood up, and Adam also stood up, placed his paws on his chest, licked his cheeks. In his eyes there shone great happiness because they two were going away alone together.

But Blake turned back down the path, and the dog, realizing that there was to be no freedom, walked close behind him, brushing with his body sometimes the stuff of Blake's trousers.

Next day Blake took the dog back to the place whence he had come.

Two days later, the dog, knowing that he was not wanted, sat watching a little girl who played some foolish game near him. She had plump bare legs; he watched them angrily. He was unhappy, lonely, nervous, once more in the land of the enemy, and now with no friend.

Through the air, mingling with the silly laughter of the child and other dangerous sounds, came, he thought, a whistle. His heart hammered. His ears were up. With all his strength he bounded towards the sound. But he was chained. To-morrow he was to be given to a Cumberland farmer.

Mrs. Penwin was entertaining two ladies at tea. This was the last day before the journey south. Across the dark lawns came that irritating, melancholy whistle, disturbing her, reproaching her—and for what?

Why, for her sudden suspicion that everything in life was just ajar—one little push and all would be in its place—but would she be married to Charlie, would Mrs. Planty there be jealous of her pretty daughter, would Miss Tennyson, nibbling now at her pink piece of icing, be nursing her aged and intemperate father? . . . She looked up crossly——

“Really, Charlie . . . that must be Blake whistling. I

THE WHISTLE

can't think why now the dog's gone. To let us know what he thinks about it, I suppose. . . ." She turned to her friends. "Our chauffeur—a splendid man—we *are* so fortunate. Charlie, do tell him. It's such a hideous whistle anyway—and now the dog is gone. . . ."

BY
JOSEF WENTER



HIS LAST ADVENTURE

It was not so easy to reach land. True, the equinoctial gales were over, having gone shrieking into infinity, but the twilit depths of the ocean still heaved and rolled and for weeks this would not lessen, while wild breakers jostled each other on the surface. At such seasons the sea and the air seemed to hate each other with a grim hatred, and bellowed at each other until the wide heavens, filled to the furthest horizon with the sound, echoed back their fury.

No, it was not so easy to reach the land, the slate-black jagged cliffs of Tierra del Fuego. The old bull-seal, who had known this extremity of the world for many years, had drifted now for weeks among the surging breakers. His clan rocked beyond in the twilit depths, sometimes stretching their round heads out of the water and staring over the stormy waste, then deciding to leave it to the old man to find the right way, which they would follow themselves later on, to become acquainted with the land once more after nearly eight months journeying in the ocean.

HIS LAST ADVENTURE

The smooth head of the old seal emerged from a deep watery furrow. He inhaled the damp rainy air, then allowed himself to be lifted by an oncoming wave, helping himself forward with his broad flippers, so that his torso emerged erect from the crest of the great billow, black and spectral in the whitish-green foam of the breakers. His great eyes stared sullenly towards the coast, and as the breaking wave swept him down with it, he knew that he had been on the right route during these last weeks. It was a landscape with which he had been familiar for many years, probably ever since he had known anything. He had been born here, and since he had had any consciousness at all of existence, of the vast monotony of his life in the ocean, the vision of this storm-swept, rocky solitude had come to him every year in the springtime. Then he became restless, secret intuitions guided him on the long journey to his land—yes, to his land! For, as an old, experienced seal, tested in the battle for existence, he would be the first of the great family to climb up on to the shore and take possession of the country. Only for a few months and he knew very well that he would have to fight for room to live on the dry land, as he had always done.

The clan was still content to stay far out at sea. It grew daily larger, as from every direction fresh parties arrived at the meeting place. . . . Who knows in what latitudes their months at sea had been passed! For a good eight months they had not felt the earth under their sleek bodies. The yearly adventure on land had become dim in their memories and the youngest of them, born only the year before in this rocky wilderness, did not even know that

there was any world beyond the wide, surging world of their ocean.

There came small families, male seals with their mates, youngsters and yearlings, from the neighbourhood of the Falkland Islands, where there were rich hunting-grounds that they rarely deserted. Others had come from Cape Horn, and it was always satisfying at the end of the journey to find other members of the clan just as eager for the dry land. Others came from far southern latitudes where they had carried on their fishing among mighty ice-fields. There they had met their distant relations, the sea-lions, who lay on ice-floes all through the short days and long nights, in blinding sun and cold, glistening moonlight, grunting and blinking in benevolent well-being, scuffling and fondling each other, happy to be alive. They had noticed how these wise creatures kept convenient holes open in the ice, and how whenever there was any danger of the holes closing up, they slipped through them to keep them free. Then the ice would split and they had open fishing again. The seals did not approve of such a way of living. Out of sheer curiosity they swam with the sea-lions for a few weeks, then left them, to make their way back to the wide open spaces.

The old bull-seal seldom exercised his authority in the water—why should he, in the limitless ocean where there is room, food and liberty for all?—and he had spent his months at sea independently of the clan. He was quite glad that some females and a few youngsters and babies should attach themselves to him. In spite of his great age of thirty years he still felt himself bound to the clan,

HIS LAST ADVENTURE

though this powerful bond which had been a part of him all his life was gradually weakening.

As he clapped his front flippers round a jagged rock and raised his torso out of the white foam, the various adventures of his life floated dimly through his memory. His instinct made him head for the land in the month of May, but the great passion which used to urge him imperiously to the journey in the past had become less strong. He drew himself up to a jagged bit of rock, the great black fore-flippers clapped round it, while he braced his back-flippers against the rock, and a thundering wave lifted his heavy body easily and surely over the edge. That was what he had been waiting for and expecting. He had counted upon it because he knew the benevolence of his gloriously boisterous world.

There he lay, with the storm howling round him, sweeping over his long, rusty-black fur. The thunder of the breakers surged over him, white flecks of foam bespattered him, rain poured down on him. Land! Did he belong here, or was the dark, fathomless ocean his home? He lay for hours staring out into space, though sometimes he turned his head and eyed the nearer distance. It was still dark and only the crests of the waves gleamed in glass-green phosphorescence. Here on land the marks for ear and eye were different from those in the twilight depths and he had to get accustomed to them again. But what did it matter, after all, to this strange creature whether it were day or night? His existence was bounded only by the great spaces, whether beneath the water or under the sky with its storms.

The clan, whose heads were now emerging here and there nearer to the coast, made no attempt to follow the old seal. They would not make the final decision until he had reached the vantage point on the furthest flat rock on the shore. There was a restlessness among the many grown seals and youngsters who were gradually approaching the coast, but they had not yet taken seriously the call to the land. After all, the waves followed each other without interruption, why should one rather than another be the last to go slipping over their wise, gentle faces before they reached land?

The old seal had taken stock of the landing place. It was just the same as always, with the stiff sea-grass swaying and dripping in the wind and rain and the sand making a sucking, slithering sound when he used his flippers to propel himself forward. The heavy body left a flattish channel into which trickled a thin stream of rain and seawater. He rested for a time and eyed the hundreds of rocks which lay scattered round him. Yes, there stood the wide block of stone, the viewpoint which was his favourite place, where he could doze, and keep a watchful eye on his wives all through the summer months. Everything was as it had always been, nothing had changed, the days and nights, weeks and months, had gone thundering, raining, and sometimes, but how rarely, shining over it all. He turned his head this way and that, sniffing the air, but could discern nothing but the familiar, sharp, light scent of the sea, and the warm, oily smell of the albatrosses when, filled with curiosity, they swooped and screamed round him.

HIS LAST ADVENTURE

Sometimes in the mating and summer months there had come a strange and terrible scent, when other living creatures had broken in upon the peaceful circle. The old seal had a dim and hostile remembrance of an incident which he could never quite place in his life, for it had occurred long ago and seemed beyond the limits of his consciousness. But every year when he reached the cliffs and took his first journey over the land—how odd the sand felt under his webbed fins, how different from the element of his real existence—the remembrance of it came over him so strongly that he could almost feel the strange scent in his nostrils, and sat for hours in fear, with his neck stretched towards the mainland.

For on that day, so many years ago, man had broken into the great nuptial party. At first the seals had felt only amazement, to see how erect and upright this new creature could walk. The scent was new and strange. Could it be dangerous? Danger? What was that? Was not this a benevolent world? Did they not all live happily and peaceably until overtaken by a peaceful death? Then, lying with the whitish belly turned upwards, they no longer belonged to the clan, and so ceased to exist. That was what generally happened, but on this day things had gone differently. The new, unknown, erect creature had hit about him, knocking the seals full in the face, and males and females had simply dropped over on their sides and had somehow forgotten to move off in the sand. They had marvelled but they had not understood, and they had never thought of flight. Was it not mating time? They would have to wait until this thing had passed. For

they had baby seals with them, and many wives who could not be deserted in any circumstances. They had begun to bellow in protest against such a disturbance of their happy existence, but that had been of no avail. At last the man had beaten his way—yes, actually beaten his way to the high rock where the old seal, the head of his numerous family, lay. And then the man, or rather several men, creatures who walked erect and would never be encountered in the wide spaces of the ocean, suddenly stood over him and he felt a stinging pain in his head. He had never been clear what caused it. The pain had soon gone—perhaps the man had taken it away with him? But no, he had only taken away those he had slain. For the sake of their beautiful skins he had broken in upon the peace of these living creatures and had shown them that there was another kind of death of which, it seemed, he was the master.

The man had not decreed that the old seal should die, though at that time he was still in the pride and glory of his prime. But he had slashed most of his ears away, and that had caused the stinging pain. The man was interested to find out whether this splendid fellow with the reddish fur, who reigned so proudly and securely like a pasha over his harem, bellowing at the intruder with a courageous voice, with eyes half angry and half inquisitive, whether this fellow would come to the same breeding place the next May. The man would recognize him by his mangled ears and would be able to draw pretty certain conclusions as to how the lives of the seals were spent. Such is man's way to gain a new experience at the

HIS LAST ADVENTURE

expense of a seal's mangled ears. The man had returned other years, and he always beat about him. At last he stopped coming, but the fear of him lay over the wilderness.

But on this day everything seemed safe. The old seal could take up his place and the annual land-life could begin. Soon he lay on his familiar rock and matched his voice with the storm. It was not a beautiful sound, but it was loud. Out at sea heads emerged from the waves, here one and there another. It was easy to distinguish the females from the males. The first gave the old seal pleasure and he called to them enticingly, but the latter irritated him, and he bellowed sullenly at them.

Now some of the seals began to reach the land. The old fellow eyed them suspiciously. He recognized some of them for they belonged to a family with which he had travelled in recent months in the ocean; probably they were his cousins. But others he certainly did not know. They had come from other latitudes, had heard of the convenient, flat mating-place, had probably followed some distant relative, and now here they were. His suspicions increased. Every year, it was true, strangers appeared, and he had to maintain his ancient rights against them. His own clan knew that he was not to be trifled with. They did not know that he no longer felt so strong, so active, so brave and, most curious of all and the reason no doubt for all the rest, he no longer felt the call to mate so urgently. Yet all the same he roared and called enticingly.

But the females were in no hurry. Many days passed

before they could bring themselves to attempt the landing, and even then it was hardly from any desire for the males who were waiting for them. What decided them was that they felt it was time to bring their young into the world. They could not do this in the water because the baby seals in their white woolly coats and unable to swim, would sink at once.

Every day more males clambered over the edge of the rocks. All the best places were already occupied. Their owners had tried to insist on their old rights but there were no old rights. From his point of vantage the bull-seal watched the scuffling and fighting, bellowing at the brawlers who bellowed furiously at each other, beside themselves with rage. There was such biting and wrestling, such a pulling and tumbling over each other, such a roaring and shrieking, that the albatrosses flew up in dense swarms and swooped and turned just above the heads of the valiant fighters. Croaking and screaming they abused the seals, while the hurricane howled, the rain streamed in torrents, and the breakers surged over the cliffs.

None of the seals dared to attack the old bull on his vantage point. When occasionally one of them, knowing no better, clapped his black flippers against the rock and looked as though he would attempt to climb up, he was so growled at and shown such a fearsome expanse of teeth in the curious, earless head, he was glared at so fiercely, snapped at so furiously, and roared at with so much hate that the climber desisted under protest, and finally gave vent to his annoyance from a safer distance.

HIS LAST ADVENTURE

At last, after many days had passed in this way, the pairing-places had all been more or less fought over and seized, and then everything suddenly changed. The seals began to call enticingly and gently out towards the sea, in tones which they themselves hardly recognized. Only when one of the youngsters, still too unripe in their opinion for matrimony and fatherhood, appeared too near the shore, they would begin to bellow again. But, on the other hand, they liked to see these youngsters giving the females courage to come to land, circling round them and pushing them gently nearer and nearer to the edge of the shore. Perhaps the youngsters had a secret hope of coming themselves, unnoticed, to land, of capturing some pairing-place by stealth and starting a family. But they would soon be disillusioned.

What a welcome when at last the first female reached the shore! Shy, twisting and writhing from side to side, very much afraid of the hard element beneath her body and flippers, she half lay on the sand and, lifting her head and shoulders high, regarded the scene, felt the wind, sniffed at the wet sand, and stared with great, astonished eyes at the swaying bent and at the faces of the males, who came down from the places they had won and greeted her ingratiatingly. Their faces looked quite different now from those she had known during their long wanderings all through the year in the ocean.

The seals could see that it was her first experience of the land and her first adventure with males; they realized she had thought the land a good way of escape from the pressure of the youngsters. But they could see too that

curiosity and interest were rising in her, and they began to call enticingly to her. Suddenly, feeling that there was something dangerous in their invitations, she tried to make for the sea again. Slim and nimble, she turned and slithered on her belly down the sand, using her hind-flippers cleverly as sand-paddles, her neat little head turned steadily towards the sea. She was breathing so hard that the beautiful long hairs of her beard quivered, and she made no sound. Behind her scrambled the mob of males, coaxing and wooing her, and bellowing with vexation. Gnashing their teeth venomously, they pushed each other aside, so that none of them succeeded in intercepting the fugitive. If she once reached the water she would not return to the shore that summer.

Of course the males were well acquainted with these attempts at flight. All females did the same thing when the nuptial months came round. Force had to be employed in the end as well as tenderness. And that was exciting in a way, but at the beginning of the migration to the land, when there were very few females on shore, it was more than exciting, it was almost desperate. They would not be able to reach the young seal now. The more sensible ones gave up the attempt and, stopping their race, vented their annoyance in angry barking. Let them bark; she had already almost reached the edge of the cliffs. A few yards more, then a neat dive and she would be away, would be able to dive underneath the phalanx of youngsters swimming near the shore, and make her way to the other young females far out at sea, who had felt no call yet to take up the adventure with the land and with the alluring males.

HIS LAST ADVENTURE

But suddenly a big fellow charged into her way, just in front of her nose, so that she started back, propped on her fore-flippers, wondering what to do next. The other seals took advantage of this and, bellowing with the lust of the chase, scrambled snorting towards her. In a moment she was encircled and there was no way of escape. She cowered down under so much vehemence and noise, she turned her pretty head this way and that, stared with big, helpless eyes at all these excited male faces, and gave a little pitiful cry towards the sea—a cry which was almost lost in the barking and screaming, the thunder of the breakers and the whistling of the wind.

What happened next filled the little seal with alarm. For the old bull-seal, who had thrown himself like an arrow from his rock into her path, turned on the other wooers with violence, knocking over the nearest of them and biting the most eager rival in the cheek, so that he fled, screaming. He hurled his heavy body on another, who had already laid a flipper on the fine, reddish back, as though claiming her as his possession, wooing her the while with soft enticing tones. For a few moments the two males rolled in the sand, but suddenly there was a dark stain of blood in a puddle of rain, and the baffled rival scrambled away, growling abuse as he went. He moved with difficulty, for a bite from the old seal had almost severed one of his fore-flippers. He cowered on his mating-place, and studied the wound, still growling and grumbling. He sniffed at the dangling limb, holding it with his other flipper, and full of shame at being so

ignominiously defeated, glared towards the young female, who had given up all idea of flight in the face of such overwhelming force.

It was fortunate that more and more gentle heads kept appearing over the edge of the cliffs and diverted the attention of the males. This reconciled them the more readily to the behaviour of the old pasha, who had been so overcome by desire for the beautiful young stranger that he had literally hurled himself right into her life; now he was employing all the arts of his long experience in the affairs of love to make this slim young first arrival his own. He wooed her in the softest tones he could produce from his rough throat, and made love to her with almost graceful movements of his powerful body, laid his huge fore-flippers round her neck, and at last persuaded her to turn shorewards again. He was neither hurried nor impatient for he had plenty of time. Perhaps it pleased the female to see her strong wooer so tender and ingratiating and to notice the respect with which the other males made way for him. If one of them hesitated for an instant, a short imperious bark, a gnashing of the yellow teeth was enough to send him scuttling on again.

At last they reached the old seal's mating-place. It was not big, perhaps twenty-five body-lengths square. He needed as much as that for several wives and of course the babies which would soon arrive. He tried to make it clear to the young stranger that she would have to be content with this space during the adventure on land, and must not go beyond it. There would be, indeed, nothing to eat during the whole time, but feeding was unnecessary and

HIS LAST ADVENTURE

against all custom, and she would have no time anyhow to be hungry.

This new, slim young stranger did not altogether understand at first. These laws were, it is true, already dimly in her consciousness, but she had no practical experience of them as yet. She had, therefore, no idea of wrong-doing when next day, perhaps out of boredom or perhaps from sheer curiosity, she forsook the mating-place and joined a male nearby, who for some little time had been sending out inviting calls. Though the old seal had been guarding her jealously he did not at once notice this, for his attention was focussed on the shore. More and more females were landing there, and among them were companions of many years standing who had borne him children and whom he must fetch back to his harem. Of course, he would have new, unknown wives as well, for he could never have too many.

Then he noticed his unfaithful wife and in a moment, with a loud roar, he had attacked the neighbour, and punished him severely. Then he hunted the fugitive with threatening growls and much showing of teeth back to her duty. Now she understood. She was astonished and alarmed by the changed aspect of her husband, and the laws of her ancestors became clearer in her consciousness. There was to be only one master on land? Very good, why not? And as he was an imperious and domineering master, she felt herself at last at ease in the adventure and ready for anything that might come. Already she had almost forgotten the sea. Perhaps she was really a land creature? Life was good, anyhow, that was certain.

A week later a cheerful domestic life was in full swing. All the mating-places were full and every male had captured for himself half-a-dozen wives or more. Old affection, for which there was no reason in the sea, where desire was never roused, and, where no passion disturbed the continuous gaiety, old affection of last year or the year before last, the summer love of many seasons, led old acquaintances together, and beneath the sky they saw each other with different eyes than in the twilit infinity of the ocean. Then silver-white babies slipped into the world here and there. Soon there was a faint squeaking and squalling to be heard in every family, and everywhere there was life, happy, playful, scuffling and confident.

Weeks passed, and now it was August. The mothers who had clambered to shore had become consorts again, and everything was as it always had been and always would be. Storms swept over the land and departed again, and the vast, roaring ocean surged as it had done for centuries round these creatures who were here fulfilling their destiny.

Then one day a belated stranger scrambled on shore. It was quite unusual for males to arrive on land in August, and he was greeted with much bellowing, but he took no notice of it. He was a big, blackish-brown fellow in his prime. He wandered round the mating-places, eyeing the females and showing his great teeth in a growl when the males barked at him. When one of them prepared to attack him he crouched up on his hind-quarters and hit his opponent full in the face with his fore-flippers, knocking him clean over. No one had ever seen one of the clan

HIS LAST ADVENTURE

crouch upright before, almost standing erect, as though he were in the water. And then, to their astonishment and alarm, the stranger began to walk, still upright. Males and females stared at him; chattering and murmuring arose throughout the whole encampment; and the males noticed jealously how the females twisted their necks to watch the stranger.

He had meanwhile found a place which seemed to suit him, just behind the old seal's rock. He paid no attention to his neighbours who, objecting to his presence, abused him loudly. When they became too impertinent he raised his head and bellowed back at them in a voice which reduced them to silence. All right, let him be, they thought, and decided to ignore him. But he was not content merely to be there, he wanted their wives. That was beyond a joke. Quite calmly, he broke into the nearest mating-places and chose, of course, the most beautiful of the females. The males were beside themselves with rage. They hurled themselves at him, biting and bellowing, but they could do nothing against him. He stood up to his full height, advanced on his opponents, and almost crushed them under his great weight. Their cries showed that he knew just how and where to bite. Naturally, he did not come unscathed through the battle, but this did not seem to trouble him.

In a few days he had captured for himself half-a-dozen wives, who followed him willingly enough when he growled and snapped at them. As they were already the mothers of silver-white babies, these went along with them, and the stranger was able to enjoy a belated but

none the less agreeable domesticity. All the seals gazed at him in astonishment when he performed his unusual tricks. It was amazing how he moved about with his body erect, and it was astounding and quite incomprehensible to see him suddenly turn a cartwheel and stand on his head in the sand with his hind-flippers stretched wide apart, barking cheerfully the while. The males gave up raising any objection to this apparition, and though they still maintained an attitude of curiosity, suspicion and violent dislike, none of them dared to show open hostility.

The old bull-seal had kept a sharp eye on the newcomer—a good thing for him that he had not attempted to break into his harem. Not so far, at least. The old pasha on his high rock was not interested in the stranger's tricks, but a mistrustful anger grew in him daily. So long as the interloper's attacks were directed only against the others he would do nothing more than join in the general bellowing; he would not interfere. After all, his was an exceptional position: he had his own select point of vantage.

But what was the stranger doing now? He had found a round pebble and, standing upright, laid it with his fore-flippers on his nose. Straight as an arrow, he stood there with the pebble balancing on his snout. Then he began to move forward, still erect, with the stone still on his snout. The clan roared its astonishment, and almost unconsciously the seals began to move forward behind him. It was very remarkable, it was almost frightening, and the old seal remembered the man who had stood upright, and who had broken in on them.

He was not far wrong in remembering that, for this

HIS LAST ADVENTURE

upstart came to them from the world of men. The man had taken him as a white woolly baby seal from his mother on this very shore, and had brought him up. He had taught him tricks and had made great friends with the gentle, affectionate creature. For years the seal had accompanied the man in his boat, and had become attached to him. Some weeks before the boat had overturned in a heavy sea, and the seal had been swept overboard. The man was drowned but the seal returned to its native element. For weeks he had searched for the man in this new world of sea to which he had gradually become accustomed. His master was a dim, indistinct memory, but when he performed the tricks his friend had taught him, a vision of the man came again into the animal's consciousness. Or it may have been the other way round—the seal remembered the man's voice and his magic, and then he would suddenly stand upright or hunt for pebbles to balance on his nose.

Something of the masterfulness of mankind had passed into this animal which had been man's prisoner for years. Magic passes from creature to creature, subtly and mysteriously, and fundamentally it is the same everywhere. This masterfulness made the stranger disregard the laws of the clan and obey only his own.

Then, one day, he took a fancy to the slim, dark brunette in the old seal's harem. He had not far to go and complacently set out on his way, blinking for a moment up at the old pasha, who watched the intruder's progress threateningly. He had reached the edge of the mating-place when the old seal roared at him. This did not seem

to trouble the stranger, who growled back casually enough and scrambled forwards. The young seal was only a few yards away now and the other wives gazed in alarm and curiosity at this desperado. For long they had been admiring the stranger, but they knew the old seal was a dangerous enemy.

The brunette, the new, slim wife of this year, paddled delightedly towards the intruder, barking in high glee at the intrepid lover.

There was a sudden rush, and the old seal stood between the two. The crisis had come. He struck his fore-flippers in the sand with a roar which made his wives cower and fly, and then he hurled himself at the stranger. The latter had by now risen to his full height, and, first drawing back, he then fell forward with his whole weight full on his unwieldy opponent. For a moment the old fellow was crushed into the sand, but he was very agile and, with the help of his hind-flippers, he rolled himself to one side and tried, as his custom was, to get the other underneath him. This time he failed. The stranger was too dexterous. He thrust his neck under the bull-seal's jaw and his teeth closed in his neck. There was no possibility of the other biting back, and he slid round in a circle, bellowing, with his enemy sideways on top of him. The females barked loudly in alarm, the other males bellowed furiously from their mating-places, and the babies squealed and hid behind their mothers. The noise was infernal. Gradually the bull-seal, who had lost a great deal of blood, felt his strength failing. The stranger had let go of his throat but now he had clapped his fore-flippers round the old fellow's

HIS LAST ADVENTURE

neck and was biting him furiously in the face wherever he could reach him. Once the old seal caught one of his flippers between his teeth, but his assailant merely pulled it free again, tearing the web as he did so. Maddened now by the pain, he hurled himself with terrific vigour on the already flagging bull, emitting guttural roars, and biting with such frenzy that the old seal had to give up the struggle and soon lay motionless. The stranger bellowed at him for a while in anger and derision, then turned to look for the brunette. She had cowered shyly in a corner and he scrambled towards her. She received him with friendly movements of her neck and with a call, shrill but not overloud. He picked her up with his teeth in the fur of her back and carried her off to his harem, while she gazed round her, proud and content.

The bull blinked after them. He knew that his reign was over and that he could do nothing more. He was beaten. He stared at his other wives and saw that their respect for him was gone. They paid no attention to him but lay watching the stranger. Perhaps, they thought, he will take us up too, with his teeth in the fur of our backs! We should like that; he's a fine fellow.

The old seal attempted to clamber up to his rock, but he could not manage it. His flippers were torn to bits and he breathed with difficulty. Blood still dripped from his neck and all over his face. Further effort was useless. He would rest for a little and then he would leave the clan secretly, at night. There were lonely rocks further out where the wounded and conquered ended their days, sadly and sullenly, and he would make his way out to

JOSEF WENTER

them. He had often derided those lone seals when their barking came faintly down the wind to the mainland, but he had not understood then what it meant to be beaten, not to count any more, to be lonely among the clan. Now he understood and when, some hours later, he reached the place of refuge, he was reconciled to his fate. He enjoyed the peace which reigned among these superfluous male folk, greyheads and cripples, and he lay thinking over his exploits. He would nurse his wounds and put his trust in the great healing power of the sea, which was always ready to take the conquered into its wonderful stillness whenever they were ready to go. He would not wait for the late autumn when the rest of the clan returned to the ocean.

When the amorous, impassioned bellowing came to him faintly through the surge of the breakers, it stirred him no longer. Love was dead and all passion. What was left for him now in this strange world, where every movement of his wounded limbs hurt him? One day or one night he would make the final decision, would wait for the crest of a great wave, then let himself slip over the edge and be swept away by it, the strange, rare adventures on the land and all his passion for it behind him for ever.

Translated by L. M. STALKER.

BY
HENRY WILLIAMSON

★

THE SAGA OF THE ONE-EYED

I

A roaring westerly wind came over the Atlantic, scattering a spray from the crests of the green rollers and rushing up the face of the precipice. Gulls perched on ledges of the cliff had only to launch themselves forward into the uptrend to reach the swarded lip above, but their movements were clumsy. Usually they were masters of wind, but to-day a gale was blowing, and they were whirled and buffeted and tossed like the dry brown heads of old sea-pinks in the crevices around them.

But to the blast and rush of the gale Chakchek the One-Eyed was indifferent. Three thousand feet over the Devon promontory he hung, wings curved slightly backwards; sometimes those wings twinkled; he was a black star in the wind on which for six days he had swept from Labrador to England.

His eye regarded all below him: the three rabbits venturing forth from the bonded stone wall, the raven behind it standing in the furrows turned that morning, the finch striving vainly to fly into the wind, the yelping gulls, the

oyster-catchers perched on the rocks. At three thousand feet he was anchored, this tiercel, or male peregrine falcon, contemptuous of the gusts, contemptuous of the raven, the gulls, the rabbits, scornful of every living thing: head of the ancient and noble house of Chakchek, haughtiest falcons in the West Country; The One-Eyed, who ranged the airways above Exmoor and the Severn Sea; who fled at will along the Atlantic seaboard from Skomer to Tintagel; who raced over to Lundy because he fancied the blood of a sea-parrot; Chakchek the unmated, Chakchek the outlaw. Hark to the Saga of Chakchek the One-Eyed!

In the wind was he fixed, watching the land far below, unmoving, his eye fiercely beautiful, his blue notched beak pointing downwards. The wind hummed past his taut pinions, thrummed in his stiff tail; there was he fixed—but now the wind shrieked by those compressed feathers, he was falling, falling; the greensward rushed upwards, and he cried out aloud for the very sweetness of life. The linnet that was struggling in the wind collapsed as the shrill cry dropped to a chromatic whine below it. The tiercel had missed by seven inches, and the linnet was saved; but so agitated was the tiny bird's heart that it fell quivering into a gorse bush, gaping and gasping. As for Chakchek, he was three thousand feet above the headland, having swooped up in a great curve.

The large sensitive eye responded to the slightest movement. Something Chakchek must have seen from the rear corner of it, for with racing sweeps he climbed to an altitude of six thousand feet—invisible from below. Once

THE SAGA OF THE ONE-EYED

more he was anchored, then slipping across the blue sky in a slightly slanting line.

He had seen the pigeons wheeling above Scarnell Court, a white house ten miles away, and standing in a wood on the slope of the river. One hundred seconds passed, and he was halfway over the lonely sandhills and the wastes of the Burrows. Above the ribs of wrecked boats embedded in the flats he passed, losing height as he swept downward like a hissing and shankless anchorhead of iron. One hundred and fifty seconds, and now he was passing a train and its tiny string of white steam, as it crawled beside the estuary and its fawn sandbanks. Two hundred and eighty seconds, and the pigeons saw what was hurtling upon them; they scattered like torn paper thrown to the wind; the terror was above them, and falling vertically in the grand stoop. The feather-scream of the tiercel rose in pitch; at over two hundred miles an hour he fell. Now the pigeons were dashing into the trees, all except one that was neck-limp and clutched in the tiercel's talons; now an old gentleman, dozing in a chair on the lawn below, was alarmed by the blood-splashes that appeared suddenly on his book.

The old man peered upwards, but saw nothing; for Chakchek was hidden by the gables of the house, upon the roof of which he plucked and ate the pigeon, leaving a complete skeleton near a skylight four minutes later. Then once more he was a speck in the sky, racing eastwards. Only when the red sun was sinking into a wild ocean that winter afternoon did he return to the headland, having arrived there after roving in a course of nearly four

hundred miles; and he brought with him a mate to be mother of Chakcheks, having found her in the great forest of Savernake, near Marlborough. She was a daughter of that branch of Chakcheks which have bred for centuries in the spire of Salisbury Cathedral, that glorious work of God in man.

II

Days of sleet and frost passed away, the larks sang over the oat-blades growing on the stony fields of the headland, and The One-Eyed was happy. He and the mate, who was larger than himself, swept the sky from dawn till sunset, and when the evening star was silver in the west they returned to the precipice, closing their pinions and plunging past the gulls to Bone Ledge, the eyrie above the Cave of Seals.

One morning as they hung aloft a bird with broad brown wings sailed over their heads, and from it came a mewling cry. Chakchek cocked his head, and the one eye glittered. The mate appeared oblivious of the thing above—it was not her affair.

The buzzard belonged to the same family as the falcon, but the relationship was distant. He had no tooth, or notch, in his beak; an ignoble fellow that fed on the creeping things of the earth—beetles, rabbits, snakes, rats, mice, and even worms. In the lower air he was the sport of gulls, flapping like an owl with his clumsy wings. But in the high freeness his flight was superb; he could soar away tranquil hours without a wing-beat; not for him the fever and the restlessness of a peregrine's life. *Hissh*—he rocked

THE SAGA OF THE ONE-EYED

on his back, striking upwards with heavy claws. The One-Eyed swerved in his stoop and shot a hundred feet below him; climbed again and dashed at the intruder. The buzzard, who had only been calling for his mate to join him in peaceful contemplation of the green sea and blue shadows, was sent into a terrified fluster. At every swoop he cried out, losing height all the time, until he was driven halfway to the mainland, where Kronk the raven usually made his nest. Here Chakchek left him, and before he went back he stooped at Kronk, but changed his mind abruptly and returned to the precipice.

The buzzard flapped away from the harsh oaths of Kronk and his wife, and when they were tired of trying to pull out his tail feathers, a dozen gulls took up the pursuit. Over the mainland they abandoned him, and a tomtit as big as a mouse pursued him; serenely the buzzard sailed down the valley to his treetop castle in the pinewood.

Chakchek flew the mile in thirty-eight seconds and found the mate still poised. He joined her, chattering shrilly a welcome. Suddenly she swung away, and commenced to climb. Chakchek followed. Into a cloud they flew, bursting through the vapour to see the blue sky above them. Higher and higher they mounted, Chakchek feeling the strings of his heart vibrating with a radiant warmth. Soon the headland lay below them very small, with brown and green patches, divided by dark stone walls, and edged with white foam. From this loftiness mortal eye could have perceived no life, discerned no movement, but the one eye of Chakchek saw every gull, every jade-black shag squatting on their rock beneath the

cliff; it saw the head of Jarrk the seal filling its lungs before diving again for conger eel, and the motionless humans lying at the precipice edge. Higher they climbed, till they could see the mountains of Wales across the Severn Sea, to the north, and southwards the tors of Dartmoor: beyond, to the English Channel and a blue line that might have been France.

The pinions of the mate ceased to strike the air. She drew them into her sides, and fell. Chakchek followed; she rolled over and faced him; he touched her beak with his, and they snapped together—never had there been such rapture in his heart. Madly towards the headland they dashed, kissing and chattering. The girl and her companion lying on the sward heard the hissing of their descent, and jumped up, shouting. Down, down, down the falcons whirled; every gull yelped and seemed to fade away into the rocky sides of the cliff; the girl clutched the boy, for surely the falcons were going to tear them: *hiss-s-h*, they swerved and with barred wings and blue backs flashed past, surely to be killed on the grey boulders below—but no, they were flying rapidly out to sea. Then they turned and rushed back, twirling round one another, and uttering all the time their sweet-shrill cries of love.

“There will be eggs in the nest before long,” said the boy. “Do you remember how we climbed for that heron’s nest last year?”

The girl nodded. She had long black hair, and her eyes were gentle.

“But, Howard, by the time they lay, the hols. will be over, and I shall be back at the convent.”

THE SAGA OF THE ONE-EYED

"Well, I'll watch them and guard it from collectors, and go down when they're hatched and bag one. Then when you come back I'll have it trained."

"How lovely!" cried the girl, her eyes in excitement suddenly auburn like the field behind the bonded stone wall. "Look, look!" she pointed.

An oyster-catcher—a creature with long crimson beak and pied wings—had been flying unconcernedly from Morte Point. The falcons half a mile high were apparently annoyed, for both swept down: The One-Eyed arrived first, and the puff of feathers was hardly scattered before the broken thing was lying in the water, and they were gone. As the boy and the girl looked a fish rose and seized it and once more the ocean was divine under the April sun.

III

The sea-pinks came out, and the gulls too began to sit. Chakchek was happy. One May morning, as he dropped from the sky to Bone Ledge with a rock-dove in his claws, he was amazed by the curious attitude of his mate. She was standing over the three reddish-brown eggs, her head turned to one side, very still. Chakchek ran to her, and listened. Faintly within one shell there was the sound of feeble tapping. He peered with his one eye. Tap-tip.

Chakchek had been born on Bone Ledge two years before, and this was his first mating. Rapture at the sound overcame him and he danced. Then he went quite close to the mate and fondled her beak with his, and spoke to her tenderly. After kissing her several times—he did this by snapping the upper mandible of his bill with hers, invert-

ing his head to do so—he fed her, as she nestled over the eggs, with morsels from the dead rock-dove. He displayed the same tenderness all the afternoon, and at six o'clock one nestling was free of the encumbering shell. In a frail voice it said its name was Wizzle.

To celebrate the wonder, Chakchek had a fight with Kronk, nearly impaling himself on the raven's beak in his jubilation. Then he dashed at the shags perched upon their family rock, causing them to dive into the water. Afterwards he brought many rock-pipits, finches, doves and little auks to Bone Ledge, to ensure that his first-born should not die of hunger.

The mate was several seasons old, and had had as many broods, although all of them had been destroyed. Chakchek had not had her experience, and only realized after tearing up seven birds that one nestling did not require so many, nor could it tear them itself, but required minute morsels. Chakchek was amused by the downy thing, and tried to squeak to it in return; at which the mate kissed him and preened his pinion feathers, then shivered her own as though she too were little, and required feeding. Immediately Chakchek brought morsels for her, which she swallowed while rapturously kissing the squeaker. Oh, they loved each other, Chakchek the One-Eyed and his mate; and they loved more than ever when two squeakers were out of the red-brown shells.

When they were three days old, the tiercel took over the duties of brooding, and the falcon brought plucked and skinned birds to him. Every evening the pair flew a mile above the headland, to fall wing-tumbled and

THE SAGA OF THE ONE-EYED

swooping. Once they saw two immense birds flying high over them with stretched necks and white wings. They were a mile higher than themselves, wild swans from whom came a flourish of silver-trumpet notes. Chakchek did not attack them; they were nowhere near Bone Ledge.

June came, and both birds were busy from dawn till sunset. The mate did the hunting, bringing birds and calling *way-ee* to Chakchek, who answered her and slipped off to take in mid-air the food she brought. The two eyesses had grown considerably, and their wing-feathers were sprouting from grey quills. Many times during the day The One-Eyed called for food, *way-ee, way-ee*, just like a gull. When it came he yapped to the fledglings to make them eat the faster.

Usually when the falcon uttered the food cry, he flew out and took the prey from her in the air; but sometimes she brought it, often headless—so terrible her kill—to the eyrie. Chakchek distributed mouthfuls of feathers first, then pieces of flesh. Large lumps he swallowed himself. The young eyesses swallowed most of the bones, and the legs as well. When no longer hungry, their crops bulged. They fought, and had many tugging matches for legs and feathers. Wizzle, firstborn and tiercel, was half the size of his sister. Bone Ledge became littered with wings of rock-doves and partridges, little auks, oyster-catchers, lapwing, kestrel, and wild duck. Besides these were dozens of small aluminium rings stamped with letters and numbers, some covered with red rubber. Many pigeons from the cots of Scarnell Court had been taken, and their rings lay on Bone Ledge. The rings had been on the legs of Sir Godfrey

Crawdelhook's fancy birds, one of which the falcon took every morning. The baronet was not an amiable man even when he endeavoured to be specially pleasant to anyone, and it was often said in Barum that the only things he cared about were his pigeons. Day after day he waited with a twelve-bore gun in order to shoot the raiding falcon.

Day after day she mounted high above the headland, and saw the summer vapour lying over the Santon Burrows, and beyond, the Long Bridge of Bideford and its slow human traffic. But her interest lay eastwards, toward the hillside village of St. Brannocks, and miles onwards, the masts of ships on the stocks at the old port of Barum. The falcon would glide across the sky, so high as to be invisible from the earth, and fall with her shattering stoop. Regularly every morning she took a pigeon.

IV

Sir Godfrey Crawdelhook talked with his head keeper, and asked him if he had any suggestions to make about the means of destroying the raider. The keeper mentioned gins; then said that the best way was to find the eyrie, wait above it, and shoot the old birds as they returned.

"And where is the eyrie?" demanded his master irritably.

"Maybe on Lundy, zur. They be master-birds fur roving!"

The attention of both men was drawn to the disturbance of the pigeons above them. They held their guns in readiness. Infinitely high in the sky a sharp black speck

THE SAGA OF THE ONE-EYED

was seen. This time Chakchek was coming. With terrified wingbeats the racing pigeons made for the shelter of the trees; but Chakchek was a precise judge of movement. He was moving as well. At a steady ninety miles an hour he had followed the river Taw, then he had closed his wings and dropped head-first. From a height of ten thousand feet he fell to the treetops in a little over thirty-five seconds. He saw only the pigeon he had marked, and knew that he could get it—then the air rocked around him with four claps of thunder. Chakchek lost control, turned a somersault, and recovered, to see two men waving their arms and to hear them shouting. He saw the pigeon disappear into the house.

So he followed and snatched it as it bumped into a bookcase, smashing the glass. A cat leapt at him as he flew out of the door, and something was flung at him. Chakchek took the pigeon upon the roof, just as Sir Godfrey's gun crashed through Sir Godfrey's own window.

A week later Chakchek and the mate went together to Barum. For a while they hung over the Square, watching the horses, the motor cars, and the people below. It was Friday, the market-day, and the town was crowded. Howard was there, and he saw them. He thought of going to the headland with The Tiger, an old fisherman who had known the cliffs from boyhood—a fearless climber. Howard desired a peregrine falcon for a pet; he would fly it at duck during the winter and train it to retrieve its kill. The sight of the birds watching the town thrilled him so that he determined to go with Tiger on the morrow. He would be going up to Oxford shortly; he

would take the bird with him! Even as he watched the peregrines turned, and swept away westwards.

No pigeons were visible around the house of Sir Godfrey Crawdelhook. The two falcons dropped to a height of four hundred feet. Nothing stirred.

Half a minute later a pigeon started to fly over the lawn. Chakchek scrutinized its peculiar movements. It flapped its wings, and the mate stooped. Chakchek remained still, ready to stoop if the mate missed. Now the mate was very small below him. The pigeon flapped desperately, and the mate had caught it. Chakchek called to her, and dived to the house-roof, where she bore her catch, and commenced to tear it, standing on it to do so.

Inside the house, Sir Godfrey chuckled as he wound in the snapped thread of black cotton.

v

Upon the roof Chakchek contentedly watched the mate. The sun was warm, and the sky was a royal blue. Three swifts passed with shrill cries by them, and he cocked his one eye at them. He began to preen his feathers.

The mate stopped eating, and drew back from the dying pigeon. She turned her head towards Chakchek, and uttered a frail whisper. He went to her, distressed. Her beak opened, and she panted, her throat throbbing. Over her liquid eyes the nictitating membranes were repeatedly drawn. She walked backwards unsteadily, all the time whispering (perhaps she remembered her young) followed by the tiercel. Once she fell over, but struggled to her feet and walked on.

THE SAGA OF THE ONE-EYED

With cries of anguish Chakchek flew up, imploring her to follow. With violent wingbeats she managed to clear the coping of the building, but she flew in curious zig-zags, like one of the snipe that Chakchek had often seized along the shores of the estuary. He screamed as two men appeared below. The mate was flapping wildly. Chakchek called to her, but she was unheeding. With a queer spinning movement she reached the lawn below, beating her wings.

For ten minutes they stood and watched her struggles, while from above Chakchek beseeched her to fly to him. She reared herself on her tail, and lay back on her wings, menacing the men with yellow feet ready to tear and blue beak ready to rend. She tried to answer Chakchek, but no sound would come.

"She'll die as soon as we give her water," said Sir Godfrey, "and it's the falcon, too. The tiercel will feed the youngsters, so we'll get him next."

The mate was gasping, for she was getting feebler. A small chirruping came from her, and Chakchek heard. Round and round the lawn he flew, just out of gunshot, his flight no longer swift and dashing and proud, but laboured like that of a buzzard in distress.

The keeper went away, and returned with a shallow trough and a can of water. He filled it, placed it near the mother bird, and withdrew. She flopped forward, and drank; wildly she beat her wings; she twitched and gaped; wildly she called to Chakchek; a convulsion passed over her, and she was dead.

Sir Godfrey picked her up and carried her into a green-

house to lay her on a shelf where she would be safe from blowflies until sent to the taxidermist.

The keeper got his gun, thinking that he would shoot the tiercel. He had hardly gone, leaving his master in the conservatory, when Chakchek, recovering his old dash, swept after the mate. Seeing him, Sir Godfrey shouted, dropped the poisoned bird, and hid his face in his arms. Attracted by the shout, the keeper came back, entered, and shut the door. Chakchek was a prisoner.

"Mind your eyes, zur," he cried; "master bird fur clitching anyone. Come this way, zur. Us can slip out of the door and leave un trapped."

Chakchek flew agitatedly inside the greenhouse, knocking over several pots, and bumping into the glass. The mate was lying on the concrete floor; he went to her, fondled her bill, but there was no response. In a little voice he spoke to her, caressing her, and making a pathetic attempt to preen her pinion feathers—as of old in the sunshine on Bone Ledge he had done.

The men returned, Sir Godfrey in a fencing mask and gauntlets, the other with a sack tied round his head and another in his hands. Sir Godfrey held a tennis racket, and with it he stunned Chakchek.

"He's got a blind eye," he said, holding the tiercel in his left hand. "Well, we'll soon even things up."

He took something from his pocket, laid the bird against his thigh, and bent over.

"Shall I wring his neck, zur?" asked the keeper a minute later, holding Chakchek, now a struggling bundle of sinews and piercing talons, in the sack.

THE SAGA OF THE ONE-EYED

Sir Godfrey laughed.

"It's only got a taste of what it's done to my pigeons. Besides," he laughed cynically, "it will be interesting from a scientific point of view to see how it gets on. Let it go."

So Chakchek was released, and he flew up into the sky. Higher and higher he towered, while the lark-song faded and the sounds below became murmurous and then silent—even the far wash of the sea that he loved so well. Perhaps he flew upwards because in his pain some dim instinct told him that he would find the mate in the solitudes of heaven, near the life-giving sun, even beyond, where it was very quiet and peaceful. The air was chilly, and Chakchek flew above the airlines of migration, those uncharted tracks of the winged hosts passing in spring and autumn; up and up he flew. In the thin windless air his pinions beat faster, and then they ceased. His towering (which is the sunward flight of a dying bird) was ended. He gave a cry, and fell, but not in the old proud hunting swoop.

Sometimes the head pointed to the earth, sometimes the feet, sometimes a swaying pinion—a scarecrow of a bird. Nothing heeded it as it neared the earth. Into the Santon Burrows the loose body flopped, and rolled down a sand-hill, among the bleached skulls of rabbits from which spilled runlets of sand, coming to rest among the empty shells of snails. Whilom the proudest of all living creatures, swiftest rover of the airways, tender lover and faithful father—thus died Chakchek the Blind.

BY
SEWELL PEASLEE WRIGHT



WORK DOG

Paska snapped up a mouthful of snow and squatted in his traces, panting. It had been a hard day, with trail to break most of the way, which made it bad going for man and dogs alike.

But Paska was thinking not of the trail behind him but of the brief stretch of trail ahead. It was only a short distance now to the big camp where the woman was; to the big camp with its warm, snow-banked kennels and the hot, rich supper of corn meal and meat that the woman would have waiting for the team.

His eyes lit up happily. A warm kennel and a hot meal after a good hard day's work on the trail—these things, and an approving word or slap now and then from the man, were all that any sled dog could ask of life.

Paska was just a very ordinary, commonplace snow-country dog; a work dog, with a dash of wolf in him somewhere, to account for his sharp muzzle and his pointed ears. He was not a husky, for he barked on occasion like any other dog. A husky only howls.

Paska's place was in the swing. He had not been trained

WORK DOG

for the responsible post of lead dog, like little red Billy up ahead, and he was not heavy enough for the punishing work of the wheel dog, who was attached directly to the toboggan and had the hardest job on the team.

Mike was the wheel dog, big old Mike, blotched with yellow and white, savage and uncertain of temper. Paska turned and glanced at Mike who was just behind him.

Tired and sore of foot, Mike was in an ugly mood. As Paska turned, Mike's lolling, steaming tongue popped back between his long white fangs, and he growled, the cords of his throat jerking.

"Quit it, Mike!" snapped the man, glancing up from the marten set he was baiting. "You hear? Quiet!"

Mike heard but he did not heed. Neither did Paska. There was no particular enmity between the dogs and no good reason for a quarrel, save that they were both trail-weary. It is the natural instinct of the sled dog, perhaps a heritage of the wolf blood in him, to fight on every possible occasion.

Paska's hackle rose stiffly at the growled challenge. He whirled round in his harness and lunged at Mike's throat, his teeth coming together on thin air as Mike leaped to one side and snapped cunningly at Paska's shoulder. In an instant the two dogs merged into a whirling, snarling tangle.

Leigh Cameron snatched up his whip and shouted again.

"Mike! Paska!" The heavy, loaded butt of the whip hammered shoulders and muzzles mercilessly, while the

rest of the team looked on with gleaming eyes, breath hanging like steam round their muzzles.

"Break! Get back where you belong, Paska! Down, Mike—down!" The man's voice was savage, and the whip fell relentlessly.

Paska took a last snap at Mike and leaped away. Mike snarled at him and flopped down in the beaten snow, panting.

"Aren't you two ashamed of yourselves?" Paska looked away into the distance, pretending not to hear the reproachful voice. It hurt him far more than the whip. "Yes, I mean you, Paska! You know what an old bruiser Mike is. Aren't you ashamed, boy?"

The dog looked up at his master—unwillingly. There was a hurt, shamed look in his brown eyes. He whined, deep in his throat, and reached out his muzzle pleadingly.

"Oh, you are ashamed, are you?"

Affection was breaking through the firmness of the man's voice now. When dogs are your only companions through five or six days out of every week, your only friends in a vast white unfriendly silence, it is hard to hold out against a contrite whine, a pair of soft brown eyes, and a muzzle reached out towards your hand.

"Well, let's go then. I suppose you wouldn't be worth much if there wasn't fight in you." Leigh slapped the dog across the muzzle with his mittened hand; a careless, forgiving gesture.

Paska, in his tangle of harness, shook his flanks and sent the snow flying from his heavy brush. He could pull the whole load himself now.

W O R K D O G

Leigh swung up ahead of the team on his long trail-breakers and started down the trail. Billy, the little red lead dog, glanced back at the rest of the team as a signal to get ready, and threw himself into his collar.

Paska leaped sideways to free himself from the entangling traces, just as the three dogs up ahead brought their weight to bear against the load. The trace that had been twisted round Paska's right hind leg tightened suddenly, throwing Paska on his side. Something snapped; a dull, spreading pain numbed that right leg as the trace jerked free.

Quickly Paska scrambled to his feet, half dragged by the three dogs ahead. Mike, behind him, growled a warning.

Paska tried gamely to keep his traces taut, but somehow it was impossible. There was no strength in the leg that had snapped and in which there was now only a numb, swollen feeling. He could limp along, with an ungainly hopping gait, but he could not pull. Mike snarled again, a second angry warning, and the man up ahead turned and looked back.

"Mike! If you don't—Ho!" The team stopped instantly at that word of command and the man came trotting back.

"What's the matter, Paska? Hurt the old foot?"

Paska looked up, grinning, his steaming pink tongue darting in and out as he panted with the pain of the injury. No matter how bad it was, everything would be all right now. The man had noticed. The man was close. He was bending over, making soft, gentle, sorry noises. . . .

"Broken! That's tough, Paska. No wonder you limped, boy."

The dog waited patiently, studying the man's face, reading his eyes. The man was thinking about something. His eyes were unhappy, they refused to meet Paska's watchful gaze.

Slowly, uncertainly, the man's mittened hand slid towards the holstered revolver he wore outside his parka.

"You poor devil! Pretty soon it'll begin really to hurt, and then. . . ."

The mittened fingers closed over the butt of the weapon while Paska watched with interest. Somehow the man would help him. The man had always helped him out of his difficulties.

In the summer, when the flies swarmed thick and black and hungry for blood, the man had dark, strong-smelling salve to rub upon the ears and other unprotected portions, to soothe the pain of the stings and keep most of the flies away. When the going was bad and sharp little balls of ice formed between the toes, the man produced moccasins for each foot. . . . No matter what happened, the man had a remedy. He would not fail Paska now that this strange new crippling pain had come.

The heavy Colt was half out of the holster. Still the man's eyes did not, could not, meet the pleading of the dog's gaze.

"No!" said the man suddenly. His teeth came together with a little click and he shoved the weapon back into its holster. His eyes met Paska's now and the mittened hand that had gripped the revolver stroked the dog's head gently.

WORK DOG

Swiftly, deftly, the man unsnapped Paska's traces. Awkwardly, yet with a certain tenderness, he lifted the dog in his arms and strode with him to the rear of the toboggan.

There he cleared a place and padded it with a few folds of the tarpaulin. Paska did not understand. He wanted to be in his place, in the team. He tried to rise, but the man's hand pushed him back gently. The man's voice reassured him that this was as it should be; that it was as the man wished it to be.

Because Paska loved this man who was his master and because the pain of the broken bone seemed to be spreading through his whole body, making him sick and dizzy and very weak, at last he was content to lie still, his head lifted uneasily, sniffing the air as they hurried on down the trail towards the big camp.

The woman at the big camp noticed instantly that something was wrong.

"Why, Leigh, what's the matter? Where's Paska?"

At the mention of his name, the dog whined softly and the woman came running swiftly to where he lay. Paska tried to get to his feet, but the broken leg failed him, and he fell back, struggling.

"The poor devil's got a broken leg, Kay. Either Mike snapped it for him in a little fight they had or he got tangled up in his harness. I guess I should have—put him out of his misery."

"No!" cried the woman sharply. "No, Leigh. He deserves better than that." She bent over the injured dog and stroked his hot muzzle. "Poor Paska! We'll have to hurt you some more, boy."

She was beautiful, this woman in the big camp, with great kindly eyes as dark and brown as Paska's own, and a gentle, caressing voice. And her hand was light and tender as a drifting snowflake.

"You think we can set the leg, Kay?" asked Leigh, doubtfully. "It's rather a hopeless job, isn't it?"

"We can do our best, anyway. Look at him, dear; look into his eyes. You couldn't use your revolver on him, could you?"

"No," said the man, his voice strangely gruff. "Wait till I tie out the rest of the team and we'll see what can be done."

Paska waited anxiously as the man led the other dogs to their kennels and unharnessed them. It would be good to be in his own kennel, back in the farthest corner where it was darkest and warmest.

But instead of being taken to his kennel, when the last of the team had been tied out, the man came and lifted Paska in his arms again, tarpaulin and all, and carried him into the camp.

It was strange, the inside of the camp. The big room was full of odd things with unfamiliar odours, and it was very warm. Paska lifted his head and sniffed sharply, his eyes roaming nervously round the room. Surely some unusual thing was about to happen.

Leigh placed the dog on the table, talking to him gently, soothingly.

"Good boy, Paska . . . take it easy . . . easy, boy. . . . That's right . . . easy . . . easy. . . . Ready, Kay?"

The woman nodded and placed some little freshly

whittled flat sticks on the table, together with some rolls of white cloth.

"Shall I hold him, Leigh?" she asked softly. "It'll hurt and he might try to get away."

"I'm afraid he might bite you. And you're not in any condition——"

"I'm not afraid of old Paska. He knows his friends, don't you, boy?"

Paska glanced up at her, rolling his eyes. He licked her soft, fragrant hand.

"See? Go ahead, Leigh. I'll hold him."

Paska felt the man's hand on the hot, throbbing leg. It was a gentle, inquiring touch, but it was agony. The leg twitched and drew away. Paska whined, his whole body shaking.

The man grasped the injured leg firmly.

A sudden flame of exquisite agony shot through Paska's body, and with a snarl his head came up and his long white fangs closed on the tender arm of the woman who was holding him.

"Paska!" There was no fear in her voice; just reproachful warning. Paska released the soft flesh and snapped at the empty air.

"Hurt you, Kay?" asked the man sharply. "If he——"

"No, dear. Paska wouldn't bite me, would you, boy?" She stroked the long, pointed ears, laid back with pain. "Ready for the bandages, Leigh?"

The long, smooth pieces of wood were laid along the leg. The strips of white cloth were wrapped round both splints and leg, making it stiff and cumbersome. But somehow that helped the pain a little.

Paska nuzzled the woman's arm gratefully. They had hurt him but they had helped him. He had known that they would help him. It was good to have a man—and a woman—upon whom you could depend.

"Finished, Leigh?"

"Yes. Now, if we can make a nest for him in the corner, away from the stove, where he won't be uncomfortably warm, and keep him there, I believe he'll pull through—after a fashion. I'm afraid, though, that it's rather a bungled job. I'm no vet."

"It looks like a very neat bit of work, dear. I'm sure that long before spring he'll be just as good as new."

But the man was closer to the truth. When, many weeks later, they took off the bandages, the leg was wasted away and crooked.

The morning after the bandages were removed Paska watched the man harness up. He held the withered foot off the snow; he still could not bear his weight upon it. Before they drove away, Paska went back into the camp. It hurt him to see them go without him, while his harness hung, stiff and useless, on its peg.

The next week when the man came back to the big camp the leg was better. Paska could walk upon it almost without limping, and the leg was larger and stronger.

Perhaps this time the man would pick up his harness after he had snapped Mike's traces in place. It would be good to trot down the trail again with a collar to push against and the clean, uncontaminated air of the bush to breathe.

But the man did not notice the waiting dog. He har-

WORK DOG

nessed the four others and drove away into the grey, cold morning.

Paska watched them go, standing silent and rigid by the corner of the camp. When the woman spoke to him, he turned swiftly, and trotted, limping, towards the bush.

That week, while the man was away, Paska's leg improved wonderfully. He could run, although his gait was broken, and only after he had been out all day did the injured member pain him noticeably.

The evening the man returned to the camp he watched Paska gravely. After the evening meal the man lit his pipe and leaned back comfortably, lazily, in his bunk.

"That was a bungled job," he pronounced sentence. "Paska's leg is always going to be bad. Otherwise it would have been all right by now. He's finished as a work dog. I'll have to pick up another this summer."

The woman put the last of the dishes away and snuggled down beside the man.

"In a way, I'm not sorry, dear; I've become used to having him round the camp. I believe I'd be lonely without him, now; the days are terribly long while you're on the trail."

"I know it, Kay." The man put his arms round her very tenderly and held her close. "Sometimes I wonder if it wouldn't be better to go out to the Post right away and wait there until——"

"Don't be silly!" The woman threw back her head, laughing, and then pressed a swift, impulsive kiss on the man's lips: "We'll go out when we planned, just before

the break-up. That'll be plenty of time. And Paska'll keep me company while you're gone, won't you, boy?"

Paska got up and crossed the room, throwing himself down on the floor close to her feet, his head stretched out upon his forepaws, his eyes rolled up at her affectionately.

He had learned to love this gentle-voiced woman; had learned, even, to endure the closeness and the warmth of the house. When the man was away she let him out for hours at a time, but always before the long, silvery shadows lengthened on the white, silent drifts, she called him back to the camp.

"You're making a house dog of him, Kay," chuckled the man. "A big, ungainly brute like Paska! Isn't he a nuisance?"

The dog glanced at the man eagerly and thumped the floor with his tail. Perhaps to-morrow, when the team was harnessed, the man would come for Paska, holding his dangling harness. Then there would be the queer close comradeship of the trail again, the interesting scents of the bush and its people, the good day's work and the good night's rest that were the just due of a sled dog.

Paska dreamed all night of days on the trail, of fights and accidents and the hackle-bristling calls of the big, gaunt timber wolves in the moonlight; of the cheery voice of the man, the warning crack of his whip and quickly bolted meals round a little fire, with the man moving about briskly, preparing for the night.

He was waiting at the door when the man went out to harness in the dawn.

First came old Mike, who barked joyously, and fairly

WORK DOG

dragged the man, holding back on the traces, to the waiting toboggan.

Paska should have been next, but the man did not even glance at him. In quick succession he harnessed the other three dogs and snapped them in place. Paska trotted up as the man turned towards the house, and blocked his path, whining.

"Like to go along, wouldn't you, old boy?" The man patted the broad head carelessly. "Too bad!"

He pushed the dog aside goodnaturedly and went into the camp. When he came out he had on his heavy parka, and carried his pack in one hand. The woman was with him.

"Well, this trip and two more and we'll be off to the Post, dear," he said. "I just hate to leave you. You will be careful, won't you?"

"Why, of course! Don't worry an instant. 'Bye, Leigh!"

He waved to her and cracked his whip. Billy, in the lead, lunged forward and swung to the left, towards the lake.

Whimpering, Paska crawled to the woman's feet, his eyes fixed upon the team hurrying away into the dawn.

They had gone again—without him. In a dim way it came to him that they would always go away like that. Without him.

The hard, keen life of the team was to be his no longer. A brief circle round the big camp, that ended at the call of a woman's voice, was all the trail there would be for him.

Paska did not understand. It was too cruel. He was a sled dog, a work dog. He had given his life gladly to the trail and to the man he called master.

Paska rose up swiftly and silently crept away. The woman called to him, but he did not stop. He did not look back. It is the nature of a dog to desire solitude in his moments and his hours of suffering.

Although the woman called him several times that day, Paska did not answer. But just as the sun disappeared she called to him again, and something in her voice caused Paska to prick his ears and stand rigid, listening.

The call came again, urgent, fearful, tremulous, and Paska read the meaning that was there. The woman needed him; this was a call for help. All indecision gone, he raced straight to the camp.

The woman was standing in the doorway, waiting for him. Her eyes seemed larger and darker than usual, and her face was pale. There was no colour even in her lips, and her voice, as she spoke, was low and tremulous and shot through with pain.

"Good old Paska," she whispered. "I wonder—oh, I wonder if I can make you understand!"

There was a paper in her hand; a bit of heavy brown paper upon which were written four trembling black words:

"Leigh: come quickly. Kay."

Paska stood quite still, watching the woman curiously as she bound the paper to his collar with a length of bright scarlet ribbon.

It was difficult to understand. She had called to him for help, and there was trouble in her voice and her eyes, and yet she only played with him now that he was there.

Falteringly, she led him over the trampled snow to the place where the toboggan had stood. Out across the smooth surface of the lake, splintery grey shadows were reaching, and the wind which had whirled the loose snow all day was going down with the sun. There was a sharper chill in the air.

"Go, Paska," whispered the woman, pushing him away and pointing out across the lake. "Oh, go to him, boy—hurry!"

Paska looked round at her and whined eagerly. What sort of a game was this? He had some dim recollections from his puppy days, when men had played games with him, but this was one he could not understand.

"Old boy, can't I make you understand?" The woman thrust his nose down close to the snow, in which the scent of the team was still clear and strong. "Go on, go to them! Mush! Mush on!"

The dog's ears pricked attentively at the familiar word of command. Mush? But that was an order to the team, to dogs in harness. No man ever gave that command to a dog wearing only a collar.

Mush? That meant go on . . . down the trail . . . and here was a trail! Could she mean——?

Joyously he started out, turning and following the trail down to the lake. With the smooth ice under his pads he turned and looked back inquiringly. Was that what she wanted?

"Yes, Paska! Go on, boy. . . . Mush!"

Paska understood only his name and the command, but the glad tone of her voice told him all the rest of the story.

This was right. This was what she wanted. He was to go on down the trail, to the man. Good! A sled dog belonged on the trail, not in the camp. Happily, Paska set out at a sharp trot, limping just a little.

Only once he paused to look back; when he was about halfway across the lake. There was a light in the camp now, which meant that the woman was there. All was well. Paska hurried on through the dusk.

It grew dark. Mile after mile slipped behind Paska, and with each mile the bad leg hurt more, and the limp became more pronounced. By the time the moon came up he was hobbling along on three legs.

From time to time he squatted in the trail, panting, tongue lolling out, ears drooping, his eyes darting restlessly. The weeks that he had been off the trail had made him soft.

Twice the hunting calls of wolf packs came to him clearly, and Paska each time increased his speed, glancing round fearfully. Every sled dog knows that the wolf is utterly without mercy; even man fears the big grey timbers when they hunt in starving, desperate packs.

The trail beneath his nose grew stronger as the moon soared into the heavens. It was not far, now, to the first of the little camps. Paska had been over this trail many, many times. And in the little camp, during the hours of darkness, would be the man.

He limped on, his muzzle white with hoar-frost from his steaming breath, his tail drooping wearily. Just ahead was the clearing and the little camp where he would find the man. That was good.

A chorus of dog voices rose upon the stillness of the night. Paska answered them briefly, and hobbled into the clearing. The man, from inside the camp, spoke sharply to the barking dogs.

Paska paused before the door of the camp. He was there. The man was in the camp. The man had ordered his dogs to be silent, to lie down and sleep. Paska was very tired, and his leg hurt him intolerably.

To curl up in his own little snow-banked kennel, there beside the camp, with his brush laid protectingly over his sensitive muzzle—what could be more desirable than that?

But he should be tied. Sled dogs are not left free to roam. If the man would but come out and stroke his head or tweak an ear and say an approving word as he tied him to the kennel, Paska could rest in peace. But those things he should have; they were the fitting reward of a sled dog who has done a hard day's work on the trail.

Paska hobbled up to the camp, put his nose to the crack of the door and whined. With one paw he scratched pleadingly on the hand-hewn planks.

There was the sound of quick movements from within and of the man's voice impatient and curious. The latch clicked and the door swung open.

The man stared down at Paska, and the dog stared back at him, his tail thumping on the trampled snow.

"Paska! How on earth——?"

Suddenly the man bent over, and with quick, strong fingers that trembled he tore at the scarlet ribbon on Paska's collar. His face, in the cold light of the moon, was stern and very pale.

The heavy brown paper crackled as the man unfolded it with fingers made clumsy by fear. He read the brief message at a glance, with a soft sound like a groan.

Then many things happened very quickly.

The man ran back into the camp. A match crackled and a candle flamed up yellowly. Packs were jerked on and laced up in a matter of seconds. Still adjusting his parka, the man hurried out of the camp, snatching up one of the sets of harness that dangled from long wooden pegs set into the outside wall.

With such speed that it was almost unbelievable, the four snarling, sleepy dogs were whisked into their harnesses. The man's pack thumped on to the toboggan; two quick turns of the lashing rope, and they were ready for the trail.

"On the toboggan, Paska," he said. "You ride back, boy." There was an odd catch in his voice that Paska had never heard before, and his hands were very gentle as he placed the weary, trembling dog on the toboggan behind the pack.

Then his whip lashed out with a crack that woke the sleeping echoes, and the team started at a sharp trot back along the trail that led to the big camp and the woman.

Paska was lying on the floor beside a gaily painted box, lined and padded with many soft, warm cloths—a box on rockers, like a chair the woman had.

In the box was a little man. He slept, and that was good. The little man could make loud, disturbing noises that sometimes caused Paska to lift his muzzle and moan in

WORK DOG

sympathy, just why Paska did not know, but it was so.

This little man had been with them ever since spring; since just a short time after they had made the hard, quick trip to the very large camp with the little camps round it, on the great lake, and during the months that had passed since then Paska had learned to love the noisy newcomer.

Paska rolled over on his other side, being careful not to throw any weight on the bad leg. The woman, moving round the stove, glanced at him and smiled. Through the open door Paska could see the man working with a bright instrument like an axe, making thin white chips fly.

"Dinner's ready, Leigh," announced the woman, going to the door. "What on earth are you making now?"

The man looked up from his work and pushed back the battered old felt hat.

"Well, you'll get a big laugh out of it, I guess," he said, running a brown hand over the wood upon which he had been working. "I'm just a little previous, but it's a late autumn, and there's nothing much else to do. So I'm working on this."

"But what is it, silly?"

"Get ready for a laugh, dear; I don't care. It's a little toboggan for Jimmy, in there. By next winter I expect he'll be big enough to knock around a little, and I got the idea he should have his own little toboggan. Paska will pull it for him—he'll love it, and it will be easy work."

The woman glanced over her shoulder at the dog, and Paska tapped gently on the floor with his tail to show he knew they were talking about him.

"Yes," she said, "I think he'll like the feel of harness

SEWELL PEASLEE WRIGHT

again and the knowledge that he has work to do."

Leigh Cameron dropped his adze and came up to his wife, slipping his arms round her tenderly.

"Kay," he whispered, "Paska did a whole life's work in one night. He came on three legs—I could see his cripple's tracks as we came back along the trail. . . . But I think you're right. He loves the harness and a hard day's work."

Paska opened one sleepy eye and looked up at them. They were his people; his man and his woman. And they did not forget a dog who was crippled and worthless, who could not pull against his collar on long, hard trails from dawn until dusk as a sled dog should.

They remembered him. They spoke his name often. They patted him and talked to him in soft, kindly words. It was strange that this should be so, but it was. And that, also, was good.

Paska slowly closed the one observing eye and stretched himself a bit more comfortably beside the bed of the little man who was sometimes very noisy.

SRI PRATAP COLLEGE LIBRARY,
SRINAGAR.

F823

M99

"This book was taken from the Library on the date last stamped. A fine of $\frac{1}{2}$ anna will be charged for each day the book is kept over due."

9740

No 2268

298867

F823

M99

My Best Animal
Story.

9740

De225M 117

21De52 6038

29Se51 8019

SRI
PRATAP
COLLEGE LIB.
SRINAGAR.

Members of College
Teaching Staff can borrow
ten books at a time and
can retain these for one
month.

Any intermediate
student of the college can
borrow one book at a time,
any Degree or Honours or
Post Graduate student of the
college, two books at a time,
and these can retain books
for 14 days.

Books in any way
injured or lost shall
be paid for or
replaced by the
borrower.